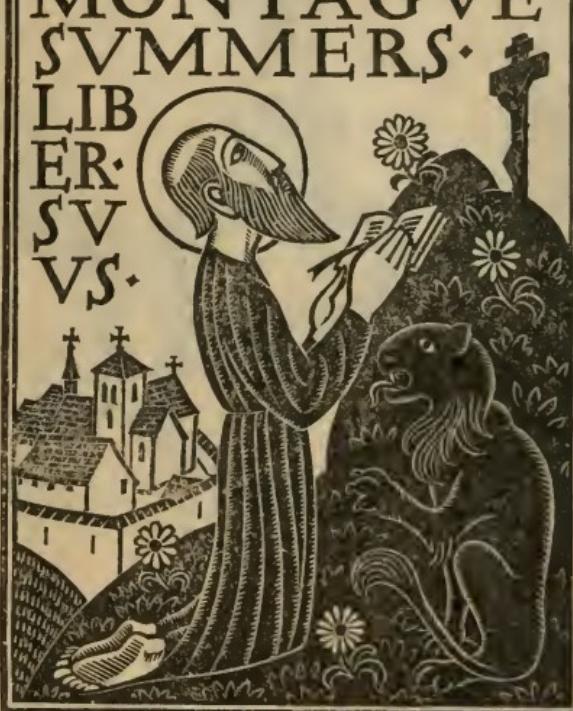


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Rosalie;

OR, THE

CASTLE OF MONTALABRETTI.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

“ Led through a sad variety of woes.”

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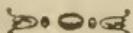
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Rosalie.

CHAPTER I.

“ Can’st thou know peace ?
Is conscience mute within ;
That upright delegate for secret sin ?
Is nature so extinguish’d in thy heart,
That not one spark remains ? ”



ROSALIE now anxiously solicited to enter upon her little recital ; and the Su-

perior having guarded against any interruption, she related to her and Sister Magdalena, all the events which had occurred during her visit at Florence. She detailed, with truth and precision, the conduct of the Marchese, the Marchesa, Leonardo, and Olivia ; neither was there a single thought or sentiment, in her pure and innocent bosom, concealed from their view.

Nothing could exceed the surprize and interest displayed by her auditors, as she unfolded every event ; and when she arrived at the extraordinary conclusion of the narrative, the Abbess, whose fellings were moderated by reflection and the mild duties of her religion, could scarcely repress the indignation which the unjustifiable cruelty of the Marchese merited. Tears forced themselves down her

cheeks, as she embraced and applauded Rosalie.

From the traits of the Marchese's character, which her inexperienced observation had pourtrayed, it was easy to perceive, that he united the most dangerous principles, with the most refined artifice ; and that she should have acquitted herself, through so many trials, with such delicate propriety and discriminating judgement, was cause of triumph to the Superior and Sister Magdalena, who had both shared in forming her mind, and mutually, although unknown to each other, gave a sigh of regret, that the good Father Sebastiano was not living, to share in their joy, as he had in their task.

The first care of the Lady Abbess was, to remove from the mind of Rosalie, all apprehensions of further danger from the Marchese. The sacredness of her asylum, she said, could not now be violated; and his sending her back in safety, almost amounted to a proof, that he had never seriously intended to persecute her, after she had quitted his palazzo. His threats were most probably designed to terrify her into a compliance with his wishes; or, if that failed, to impress her with an idea of the effect of his vengeance, should she ever dare to brave it. On the subject of Leonardo's passion, she was silent, wishing rather to postpone that conversation, to moments of less agitation than the present; but both herself and Magdalena dwelt with delight on the affecting friendship of Olivia, and the virtues of her heart.

Rosalie, about whose mind there yet hung a fearful presentment of the Abbot Beneditto, next spoke of his visit to the Marchese, and the impression the first view she had of him had made upon her mind. She also related the conversation she had held with him at the palazzo, whilst tears fell from her eyes, at pronouncing the name of her revered tutor. She concealed the suspicions of Margarita, not thinking them of sufficient weight to merit notice ; but she again recurred to those of Count Marioni, and the precautions he had judged so necessary. The countenance of the Superior exhibited, for some moments, the traces of latent uneasiness ; but it quickly passed away, and she said, cheerfully—

“ No harm can assail you, my child, whilst you are under my protection.”

Rosalie caught her hand, but a tear dropped upon it, as she pressed it to her lips. The conversation she had held with the Father beneath the terrazzo, now recurred to the memory of Rosalie, and she repeated his words. Again a shade of deep thought hung on the brow of the Superior: and, after a time, she said—

“ Perhaps it is necessary that we should act more circumspectly than heretofore.”

In her narration, Rosalie had suppressed the little history which Count Marioni had given her, of the attachment which had existed between him and Magdalena. It was a mark of attention she considered due to the feelings of her friend; and the secret having been im-

parted to her confidentially, she did not think herself at liberty to speak of it before any third person whatever. She almost feared to mention his name, and scarcely dared trust herself to steal a glance at Magdalena, when she did so. That transient look, however, shewed her a countenance at once composed and serene; and gave her a full assurance, that however her heart might once have throbbed with affection, and been lacerated by misfortunes and disappointment, her reason, and the duties of her religion, had effectually subdued its every emotion.

Rosalie, whose footsteps had never yet been bounded, durst not now ask to go to the hamlet, where she was used to gladden so many hearts by her condescension, and the various comforts she

used to convey to them from the convent. She was aware, from the few words which had escaped from the Abbess, that Father Beneditto did not rank high in her esteem, and had determined that the circumspection she had advised, should be considered, in every respect, as amounting to a prohibition. She even avoided, as much as possible, the mentioning of his name.

The narrative which she had heard from Rosalie, had seriously and deeply affected the mind of the Abbess; who, notwithstanding she had judged it right to quiet her apprehensions, foresaw, from the conduct of the Marchese, that he would not scruple at any thing to remove her from the possibility of seeing Leonardo again. A violent and ambitious spirit like his, was capable of forming any

evil designs whatever; and his power and affluence fatally enabled him to carry them into execution. She had thought, at the moment she had said so to Rosalie, that if he had intended her mischief, he would have attempted it on the journey; but, on reflection, she perceived that was not the time to practise it, without exposing himself to suspicion, and, perhaps, detection, from the vigilance of Leonardo. He had, no doubt, formed plans of more certain danger to Rosalie, and greater security to himself. By what means he could effect them, she was not able to form even a conjecture, unless through the assistance of Father Beneditto, whose elevation, at this crisis, she most truly lamented. Several unfavourable traits in the character of the Abbot had not escaped her penetration. She had detected malignancy under the appearance

of austere manners ; and, amidst his professions of humility, discerned cunning, envy, and ambition. Already his assumption of power had been intolerable ; and he seemed to regard every one with dark suspicion and dislike, who did not yield the homage he exacted. His interference in the regulations of her community, had, on several occasions, given her cause for displeasure, which she had, however, repressed as much as possible ; but she could not help feeling alarm at the insidious attempts she saw him practise to raise a party against her among the nuns, who might destroy much of that peaceful happiness she had hitherto experienced. A compact of friendship between such a man and the Marchese, gave her reason to suspect that their characters must be similar ; and to infer, that he would be ready to assist in any machinations which might be formed.

To enter upon any fixed plan to oppose their designs, before she was aware what direction they would take, was impossible. All that she could do, was to watch the enemy with unwearyed, but concealed, attention ; and to be scrupulously guarded in whatever related to Rosalie. That she might not unnecessarily subject her to terror, she laid hold of the pretext afforded by the Abbot's remark, to caution her not to venture beyond the boundaries of the convent, or even to quit the apartments appropriated to her use, unless in company with some of the nuns : as the principal idea which suggested itself was that of an attempt to force her from the convent. Yet even this dread was in part removed, when she considered that it was not probable the Abbot would throw such an obstruction in the way of his designs, if such had

been their tendency. In short, she was perplexed and unhappy; for never yet having had occasion to counteract the schemes of designing villainy, she found herself incompetent to form, or execute, any plans for their detection. She drew the only consolation and advice she could receive, from Sister Magdalena; who, although affected with some fears, tried to give those hopes of security to the Abbess, which she could not afford to herself.

In this state of isksome suspense and suspicion, some time elapsed at the convent. The visits of the Father Abbot were never solicited, except when the offices of religion required it; and if between him and the Abbess there was the appearance of civility, there was certainly nothing of confidence. Rosalie as

seldom as possible appeared in his view; and, to effect this the more completely, she was invariably seated at the organ, during the matin and vesper services. Whenever they did meet, he still continued to survey her with that sort of gloomy and fixed observation, which never failed to impress her with terror, and always made her hasten from his presence.

As the convent happened at this time to be without any other boarder than Rosalie, for as such the Lady Abbess would always have her considered, the nuns, more frequently than she could have wished, gave her their company, under the pretence that she was without companions. Among these, the Sister Ursula was the most intrusive, and by far the most disagreeable, as she had dis-

liked her, even from the days of her childhood. Her visits were soon so perpetually repeated, as almost to exclude, the rest of the nuns; and, availing herself of the advantage of finding her often alone, she began to insinuate that her worldly, as well as her eternal, happiness, could only be secured by taking the veil.

Rosalie, at first thrown a little off her guard, asked her, with surprize, how she could pretend to judge of her circumstances or situation ?

Ursula artfully evaded this question, and entered upon a long list of common place motives, to which she blieved her own rhetoric gave important weight. These arguments, which were frequently urged, Rosalie never attempted to refute;

but generally answered calmly, that she felt no impulse of the sort, and that it certainly was not the life she should choose.

As a repetition of this conversation became extremely tiresome, Rosalie thought it of sufficient importance to communicate to the Abbess, adding, that she was sure she had received her instructions from Father Beneditto, and had learned from him some of the events which had occurred at Florence.

The Abbess scarcely could persuade herself that he would make use of so weak an advocate, or employ such harmless means to effect his purpose; but, lest it should be so, bade her still persevere in the same calm but resolute refusal. It convinced her, however, of one

circumstance, which was, that there subsisted between the Father and Ursula an entire confidence ; but she held the vehicle he employed of too little consequence to excite any serious alarm : and his having begun his plan of operations from so contemptible a quarter, inclined her to believe, that he dared not to adopt any violent measures.

Good minds are ever thus unwilling to believe that treachery in another, which they are incapable of practising themselves. The Superior was doomed to an early and fatal conviction, that her opinion was erroneous.

Having one day been confined to her apartment by an intolerably bad headache, Rosalie, towards the close of the evening, stole down into the cloyster, to

breathe the fresh air; and, wishing to enjoy a solitary walk, she turned to that side of the quadrangle, most thrown into shade by the gloom of departing day. Vesper service had just concluded, and she believed the nuns would have retired, by this time, to their cells; but, on turning the corner of the cloyster, she found Sister Ursula in earnest conversation with Father Beneditto. She felt her usual involuntary dread, when she beheld the monk; but, as it was too late to retreat, she determined to pass them hastily, with the salutation of the evening: the Abbot, however, in a tone of authority, stopped her progress.

“Have you heard aught of the family of Barrazzi lately, Daughter?” said he.

"I have not, Father; but I hope you can inform me of their welfare."

"Domestic peace, once broken," said he in a voice of peculiar severity, "is seldom restored."

"They have my best wishes," replied Rosalie, meekly, and would have passed on.

"Your best wishes!" echoed the Father. "It is easy to discern that those wishes centre in the palazzo; and that your thoughts are still fixed on the gaieties of Florence."

"The gaieties of Florence, Father, have no attractions for me; nor do I wish ever to enter the palazzo again: but my thoughts, I confess, I cannot detach from

it, since some of the events which occurred to me there, are so dear to my memory, that they cannot be forgotten ; and others so painful, that I must lose my sensibility, before they can be eradicated.”

“ The sensibility you speak of, neither suits these holy walls, nor the destination of your future life,” replied he. “ It were well if you would immediately enter upon your noviciate.”

“ My own inclinations,” answered she, “ do not lead me to that choice ; neither do those who have a right to dispose of me decree it for me,”

“ Those who have a *right* to direct your choice,” said he, in a raised and peremptory tone of voice, “ are those who

have the power to enforce obedience. Who those friends are who presume to decide for you, and what their claims are, will soon be examined; and if you wish not to involve them in ruin, you will instantly make the election which is required from you."

It was well that the fast falling shades of evening concealed the countenance of Beneditto from Rosalie; for his voice, and his implied threat against the Abbess, had struck sufficient dismay and terror into her soul. She caught the arm of Ursula for support; and motioning to return into the interior of the convent, the Sister conducted her tottering footsteps. Arrived at the door of her apartment, Ursula officiously offered to enter with her, but Rosalie requested to be left alone, and she was obliged to depart.

Left to her own reflections, poor Rosalie began to contemplate the horrors of her situation. Every fearful presentment was now realized. She beheld the storm ready to burst, whose fury would not vent itself on a single object, but convey destruction to those most dear to her. Could she offer herself a willing victim to appease its rage? Her very nature revolted from the thought! It would be profanation to attempt it; since Heaven would reject the offering of a rebellious spirit. A thousand fond remembrances, which had been banishsd from her thoughts, but still lay lurking in her bosom, now rose to her recollection. She had given promises that no force should compel her to take the veil; and if such was attempted, Leonardo was exonerated from his engagements with his father, and would fly to her rescue. She paused—

an unapproving sentiment saddened her heart. What! would she then abandon her first, her best, her dearest friend? Leave her to sustain the effects of that violence, which she herself dared not encounter? She recoiled with horror from the idea, and her own misery sunk into nothing by the comparison. Yes: if nothing else would avert the evil, she would voluntarily devote herself, to preserve her inestimable, her excellent benefactress, as the less cruel alternative. The precepts of the venerable Father Sebastiano, were awakened in her memory, where they lay dormant only until some great occasion should rouse them into action. He had taught her that the perfection of virtue was to sustain misfortune with equanimity: and that the performance of a duty, required from us by justice and gratitude, would afford a

solace to the mind, which would support it through the most arduous trials. This then, was the conduct required from her; and she would acquit herself of it with a degree of firmness becoming the character to which she aspired. By voluntarily renouncing the world, she absolved Leonardo from the dangerous consequences of his rash vow, which so generously included her preservation, at the expence of his own birth-right and family ties. Alas ! love so exalted as his, ought to excite sentiments equally noble in her ! Even to him she owed the sacrifice, since it would restore him to his obedience, and the affection he had forfeited by his resistance of parental authority. Her tears flowed fast, as she formed these resolutions, but they fell without weakness ; and, giving relief to her throbbing heart, assisted her to acquire a complete triumph over herself.

She next debated on the propriety of declaring the whole to the Lady Abbess; and although she would gladly have avoided the repetition of what she knew must cruelly distress her, yet to conceal from her a design of such serious magnitude, would be to deprive her of the power of defeating it, if that were possible.

She had just formed this determination, and was preparing to depart, for the purpose of putting it into execution, when Sister Magdalena entered the apartment. As she was prepared to find Rosalie indisposed, she was the less alarmed at her swoln eyes and agitated appearance: but a fresh torrent of tears, which fell in her bosom as Rosalie threw her arms round her neck, convinced her that some new event of a distressing nature

must have occurred ; and she tenderly enquired what it could be ? Rosalie's memory was too faithful to omit a single word of the dialogue which had passed between her and the Father ; and when she had ended it, she perceived that a marked anxiety had taken possession of the features of Magdalena. After a few moment's silence, she agreed that it was necessary to apprise the Abbess of the circumstance, without a moment's delay : adding, with a deep sigh, that her own suspicions were now fatally confirmed ; and that she dreaded the power, and mischievous designs of the Abbot. Rosalie, in a solemn and affecting voice, declared her own determination, and besought Magdalena to join her in persuading the Abbess to agree to her immediate renunciation of the world.

The good Sister, with a look of pity and admiration, pressed her to her bosom, and, without saying a word, led her to the closet of the Superior.

The Abbess had just arisen from her private devotions, when the Sister and Rosalie entered her apartment, her countenance so placid, and beaming with so divine an expression, that each separately felt shocked at the idea of discomposing a tranquillity altogether so heavenly. She anxiously enquired after the health of Rosalie, and expressed her regret that she had not retired to her repose. With all the preparation she could use upon the subject, Magdalena then acquainted her with the motive which led them to so late a visit; leaving to Rosalie the repetition of the Abbot's words. The Abbess heard them with composure and dignity.

"That this man can and will give me much vexation and trouble, I plainly perceive," said she; "and I must endeavour to defeat his designs, by vigilance, prudence, and resolution. The first steps I am to take require the most mature deliberations: but this child looks ill, and requires rest, do you, good Daughter, attend to her for the night, and tranquillize her spirits. Tomorrow morning we will meet early, and I will acquaint you both with the result of my reflections."

Rosalie received an affectionate embrace from the Superior, and slowly withdrew; for the resolution she had formed hovered upon her lips, and she could scarcely repress the enthusiasm of her grateful nature. The command of the Abbess was, however, solemn, and

not to be disputed; and, accompanied by Magdalena, she retired to her apartment.

Rosalie attempted not to break the silence which was imposed upon her by her kind friend; but when they both entered the closet of the Lady Abbess on the following morning, her countenance displayed not only the sleepless night she had passed, but also the contending emotions of her mind.

The Superior, perceiving Rosalie's perturbation, kindly exerted herself to sooth and compose her, and declared that she thought they had all given too much importance to the threats of the Abbot, who would certainly never be daring enough to pursue the unjustifiable measures he had insinuated. She said

that to betray any fear of him, would only give encouragement to so haughty a spirit as his; and that she had sent to request a conference with him, when she meant to demand his reasons for interfering in the disposal of a ward of her's; and to inform him that she had decreed a different destiny for her. Her conduct after that, would be regulated by his: but she hoped to be able to convince him, that he had not only departed from the duties of his own situation, but had forgot the respect that was due to her's. She entreated Sister Magdalena to be present during the conversation; and soon after dismissed Rosalie, repeating her charge, not to let this event prey upon her spirits.

Rosalie descended into the refectory, wishing to avoid the possibility of ex-

citing either suspicion or curiosity, among the nuns; but she was immediately accosted by one of the lay sisters, who told her she was enquired for at the grate.

As the information was not delivered with that air of importance which was generally attached to the visit of a stranger, a circumstance which, indeed, seldom occurred in this secluded region, Rosalie proceeded to the parlour without hesitation or alarm: but, on entering it, she was no less surprized than delighted to find Lord Villers waiting for her. The idea that he was married to Olivia and come to urge her to accompany them to England, as he had proposed, instantly struck her, and she began to offer her congratulations, when the fixed sadness of his countenance, gave a full check to the ebullitions of her joy, and she paused, with a look of anxious inquiry.

He now proceeded to inform her, that the premature death of the heir apparent in the elder branch of his family, had transferred upon him the title of Marquis of Langton, and rendered him next in succession to the present Duke of Dumbarton. That on this unexpected accession of wealth and dignity, he had flown to the Marchese, in the full hope and confidence, that his pretensions to the hand of Olivia would be received with complacency ; instead of which, the Marchese heard his proposals with the most violent emotion ; in short and ambiguous expressions declared his dislike to his whole family ; and absolutely prohibited any further intercourse between him and Olivia.

He next related that Olivia had been committed a close prisoner to her own

apartment, and experinced very harsh and cruel treatment from both her parents ; and that the intercession of Leonardo, to soften even the severity of his sister's treatment, had been ineffectual. That Cardinal Bernini had enforced the obedience of his nephew, whose only dependence was upon him ; and that Olivia was required to marry this volatile young man, without delay. He owned that he had found means to carry on a correspondence with Olivia, and had had several secret interviews with her : and that to avoid the dreadful fate of being forced into a marriage with a man who loved her not, and whom she could never love, she had determined to fly with him to England. The marriage was to take place as soon as they had passed the boundaries of the Italian States ; and there she would wait, in the hope that

Rosalie would join her, and accompany her to England.

The Marquis was eloquent in describing the affection of Olivia, and her dependence on the compliance of her friend. His own happiness, he said, almost depended upon it; for she had declared to him that she could not quit the Continent whilst Rosalie was in danger, distress, or uncertainty. She had enjoined him to visit the convent; and, for fear of exciting suspicion, he had left his servants and equipage at the end of the second day's journey, and travelled on with a guide; who, representing him as an obscure person, had procured him shelter for the night, at the hamlet.

Rosalie shed tears at the recital of Olivia's sufferings, and at this proof of

her affectionate attachment: and gladly would she have flown to the verge of the earth, to meet her friend, had not every dutious impulse, every sense of honour, every tie of gratitude, forbade it.

To the Marchese, though least in her estimation, she had given her word that she would renounce Leonardo. By accompanying his daughter in her flight, she sanctioned her in her disobedience; and, by that act, held out an encouragement to Leonardo, who would have a right to follow her, whilst she remained under the protection of his sister.

To Rosalie, the condemnation of others, could never be half so severely felt, as would that, she should pass upon herself, were she to commit an unworthy action; and there would be a degrada-

tion in this, which neither her principles nor her delicacy could approve.

This was the first sentiment which opposed itself to her consent, whilst the Marquis, in respectful silence, awaited her decision: but it was succeeded by another more powerful, strong, and irresistible.

The situation of the Abbess, to whom she owed every thing, and who was uncontestedly doomed to experience persecution on her account; could she leave her, and seek safety at a distance? Oh, never! This thought restored to her all the energy of her character. Yet, how could she disclose to the Marquis the real motives for her refusal, without exciting in the bosom of Olivia the most serious apprehensions for her safety; or,

by concealing them, avoid the imputation of insensibility and ingratitude? With her eyes suffused with tears, she declared all that her soul felt, at the unhappy situation of her friend, and supplicated Heaven to bless and protect her. She then reverted to the predicament she was herself placed in, by the attachment of Leonardo, and the treatment she had, in consequence of it, received from the Marchese; and besought the Marquis to exercise his own dispassionate judgement, and tell her how she *ought* to act.

"It is the affectionate partiality of my kind Olivia," added she, "which perverts her reason; otherwise, she would preserve me from reproach, rather than subject me to it. I value her friendship as one of the most inestimable gifts of Heaven; but were I to forfeit my own

good opinion, I should feel myself unworthy of retaining her's. The trials I have to encounter, are, as yet, uncertain ; but, I trust, they are such as I can conquer by fortitude and resignation. My regard for her constitutes the sweetest sensation of my existence : and the knowledge that she is happy, will, in all situations, afford me the highest delight."

The Marquis, unwilling to return an unsuccessful messenger, attempted to combat her resolution ; but, whilst he secretly admired and applauded the strength of her reason and the rectitude of her ideas, he could only feebly oppose it. He then said, that there was but one method to reconcile Olivia to depart without her ; which was, to suggest that they might remain in the South of France,

or Switzerland, until she could join them ; or, at all events, that they might be near enough to render her assistance in any emergency.

This was a plan which Rosalie could not reject, and she, therefore, gave it a tacit and grateful assent.

The Marquis had been with her nearly two hours ; and, fearing it might occasion enquiries if he staid longer, he now rose to depart. Rosalie could not refrain from tears, as she gave him her parting adieus—her thanks, and charged him with the most tender remembrances to her friend.

She had debated within her own mind whether she ought not to detain him, until she had informed the Su-

perior of his being in the convent; but the next instant had dismissed the thought, as it would have the appearance of appealing to her on the propriety of accepting an asylum which she had declined; or, at least, of making a merit of her rejection.

Neither of them strove to conceal the affliction they experienced at this parting; but, when left alone, the generous heart of Rosalie felt a solace that she had not embittered the happier prospects of Olivia with her own sorrows, or availed herself of a temptation which, had she not resisted it, would have left her a prey to remorse and self reproach.

As she still sat in the parlour, endeavouring to gain a sufficient degree of composure to appear before the Superior,

she was interrupted in her design by the abrupt entrance of the Sister Ursula, who threw a scrutinizing look at the grate, and then said—

“ Your visiter has departed. I suppose, by the length of his stay, and the anxiety which appears in your countenance, that it was the Signor Barrazzi.”

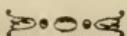
Rosalie, surprized at this attack, as it plainly evinced that she was acquainted with Leonardo’s pretensions, replied coolly, that she was deceived in her conjecture; for that the stranger was an Englishman of distinction, who had called upon her previous to his departure to his own country.

The nun looked incredulous; and

Rosalie, mortified to learn that his partiality, and, consequently, her rejection by his family, were known in the convent, hastily retired.

CHAPTER II.

"Be thou as pure as ice, as chaste as snow, still
shalt thou not escape calumny."



THE Abbot was punctual in his attendance upon the Abbess, at the appointed hour; who, with the dignity natural to her, and becoming her high

station, immediately entered upon the subject of the interview.

"Father," said she, "I have determined to learn from yourself, why you interfere in the future destination of my ward; and what your motives are for threatening to compel her to a choice, the chief merit of which is, its being voluntary?"

"My reasons," replied Beneditto, "are various; and my motives such as you will not like to hear."

"Pardon me, Father; it was the sole object I had in view, when I requested this conference; and the ambiguity of your answer strengthens, instead of obviating my wishes."

“ This then,” said he, with a stern and solemn air, “ must be my answer. Your own character and fate are involved in that of Rosalie de Albertino. Persuade her to take the veil, and you are safe; but should you encourage her in resistance, you are lost.”

“ You surely forget,” answered the Abbess, “ that in this place my power is equal to your own; and that, having nothing to dread, I am not to be intimidated. The interest you take in Rosalie, is as extraordinary as it is unnecessary, when you know that she is under my protection.”

“ Who then,” demanded the Abbot, “ is Rosalie? And by whose authority do you exercise the right of disposing of her as you think best?”

“ By the authority of her father,” replied the Superior. “ He consigned her to my charge. My promise of protection was solemnly given; and never will I consign her fate to the arbitrary will of another.”

“ Her father, say you? That matter will be investigated! But I consider that she was left under the charge of the community. *You*, Mother, received the jewels which were to indemnify the monastery for her support. Where are they?”

“ Safe in my possession,” replied the Abbess; “ and the whole sisterhood can witness for me, that they were deposited in my hands, as was Rosalie, until she should be claimed by her friends.”

"She bears the name of a distant branch of your family," said the Father, with a malicious smile, "therefore you cannot be ignorant to whom she belongs. Beware how you prevaricate. Resign the jewels for the use of the convent, and prepare Rosalie to take the veil, or tremble at the consequence."

"I cannot be made to tremble by insinuations as unbecoming as they are unfounded," replied the Abbess; "neither shall those engagements which I have conscientiously entered into, be dissolved by the unjustifiable interference of any one."

"Insinuations which are unfounded!" repeated the Abbot, in a voice raised by passion. "Those insinuations shall be proved; the iniquity of your conduct

exposed, and your punishment equal the horror of your crime."

"Whatever your accusations may lead to," replied the Abbess, with calm dignity, "I am too well guarded by the panoply of innocence to fear to meet them; but as I am unaccustomed to bear disrespectful treatment, or listen to intemperate language, I shall take the sure method of relieving myself from both."

And she took the arm of Sister Magdalena, to leave the room.

"Stop!" exclaimed the Abbot, in a tone of authoritative rage. "Provoke me not, nor hold too lightly the ignominy which awaits you. You cannot save Rosalie, but you may yet preserve yourself."

"The crimes alledged against me," said the Abbess, with a smile of exulting innocence, "cannot be very great, when the pious Abbot Beneditto proposes to me the means of compounding for them, by what he conceives to be a trifling sacrifice."

And she hastily quitted the room, determined to hear nothing further that he had to say.

Stung to the very soul, by the sarcasm of this pointed remark, the fury of the Abbot became ungovernable, and swore to pursue the Abbess to her destruction. He took so little care to conceal his wrath, that, as he passed the vaulted corridor which led to one of the doors of entrance, the nuns were struck with dismay at the revenge which frown-

ed on his dark features, and the inarticulate words he muttered, as, with hasty strides, he quitted the monastery.

The trembling Magdalena attended the Abbess to her closet, whose composure greatly surprised her, as her own feelings were poignantly painful. She had never before witnessed a scene of violence so incompatible with the mild submission of a monastic votary; and imagination already realized the terrible denunciations of the enraged Abbot. Terrified at the probable fate of the Superior, she could not repress the melancholy presages which assailed her; and, as she with tears communicated them, she besought the Abbess to exert herself, and, by every possible method, to endeavour to defeat designs of such avowed malignant tendency.

"How can I guard against an evil I have no conception of?" replied the Abbess. "Can you, my excellent Daughter, assist me to develope the obscure hints of the Father? To me they are utterly incomprehensible."

"I too am lost in the conjecture," said Magdalena. "But there is one thing, holy Mother, of which I am fearfully convinced; and that is, that a conspiracy is formed against you in the house."

"How have I given occasion for it?" said the Abbess. "Tell me, with the fidelity of a friend, that I may acknowledge and repair my error?"

"Your good qualities are your condemnation," answered Magdalena. "By

rising superior to others, you have excited envy, and created enemies."

"The study of my life," said the Abbess, "has been to act in a way that might not disgrace my exalted situation : yet, if I have abused my power, if I have been guilty of omissions, I if owe reparation, tell me?"

"I know of none ;" answered Magdalena, crossing her hands on her bosom, and bending forward her head, in pious affirmation of the truth of what she said.

"Then say, at least," resumed the Abbess, "who you believe to be my enemies?"

"Sister Ursula, I am persuaded has

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long disliked you. I am told she aimed to become the Superior before you were elected ; but her party consisted only of a few dissatisfied beings, like herself, too insignificant to be worth a thought, until the arrival of the Father Beneditto."

" Perhaps, then, they have alledged imaginary complaints against me, and he is their abettor."

" I cannot think," replied Magdalena, " that they would have entrusted him in any plot against you, had he not been pre-disposed to do you injury : he, therefore, must have been the instigator of the mischief. From the history Rosalie gave us, you know, he is the friend of the Marchese di Barazzi ; and, most probably, he has been employed by him, to use every means in his power to place

her beyond the reach of the Signor, which can no otherwise be accomplished, than by forcing her to become a nun. Ursula has, no doubt, been selected by him, as a proper person to second his designs; and has, perhaps, furnished him with some idle tales, which he means to magnify, and convert to his own purposes."

"Fear," said the Abbess, "can only inhabit a guilty conscience! However my actions may have been perverted, I take the holy Saints to witness that, they have been innocent. For myself, therefore, I have nothing to dread: but this dear child of my affection, how, how shall I be able to guard her from persecution?"

Sister Magdalena here related the conversation she had held with Rosalie on the subject ; her resolution to sacrifice herself for the preservation of her protectress, and the fortitude with which she had made that determination. She added, that she had exacted a promise from her, to prevail upon the Abbess to suffer her to begin her noviciate immediately, and to dispense with as many of the forms as possible, so that she might take the vows directly.

Tears filled the eyes of the Lady Abbess.

" This must not be," said she: " her heart is full of an earthly object; and she knows not the pangs she would experience in the renunciation of all she holds most dear."

Sister Magdalena sighed deeply, and the Abbess added—

“Such a victim could not be acceptable to Heaven: and I—could I permit it?—Impossible!”

A silence of some moments ensued; when Rosalie, hearing no sound of voices from within, gently tapped at the door, and asked if she might be admitted. The Abbess repeated to her the conversation she had just held with the Abbot; for although she would have avoided afflicting her with imaginary fears, yet now that he had avowed some dark designs, and real danger threatened her, she held it right to prepare her mind for the persecution she was about to suffer, and to strengthen it by hope and encouragement.

"The keen sense of misery which I experience at this moment, holy Mother," said Rosalie, "is on your account, and not my own. I perceive that snares are set around me, which I can escape by no other means than those of immuring myself within the walls of a convent ; and I yield to a necessity which seems inevitable. If I am permitted to remain under the dear roof which has sheltered my infant years, and if my benevolent protectress is still my guide—my more than parent, can I be otherwise than happy? I have examined my heart, and I find that I must be so : for do I not know when I was torn from your beloved presence, that I felt nothing could supply your loss? And experience has confirmed to me the truth of those sentiments which were then so predominant in my bosom. There is but one affliction which I find I cannot

endure ; and that is, the beholding you suffering and persecuted for my sake."

" My sweet and amiable child," exclaimed the Abbess, folding her to her bosom, " how well do you justify my affections, and the opinion I had formed of the maturity of your judgement, and the inflexibility of your rectitude ! I see and feel the delicacy of that attention, which would conceal from me the motive for the sacrifice you would make : I will imitate the example you have set me; and, without making an avowal of those sentiments respecting you, which cannot be shaken, I will only suggest two reasons, which have the force of imperious duties, why I ought not to consent to your taking the veil. When your father gave you to my care, and prayed that Heaven might bless me as I succoured

you, I asked him if it was his will that you should become a *religieuse*. He answered, ‘No: but that if you were not claimed by the time you arrived at the age of eighteen, I might decide your fate.’ You are yet but little more than seventeen; and, therefore, still remain a sacred deposit, whom I have promised to preserve for the disposal of your parents. And should I live to see the period your father mentioned pass, without his reassumption of you, my honour and my conscience tell me, that my duty only can end, by leaving you entire mistress of yourself.”

Rosalie attempted to express her gratitude, but tears impeded her utterance; and the Abbess continued:

“ My second motive,” said she, “ re-

lates merely to myself. My authority has been insulted, and my character traduced ; and it is a duty I owe to myself and others, to repel such unwarrantable outrage. Could I be intimidated by threats, and consent to be dictated to by this Abbot, I should give him just reason to despise the imbecility of my judgement ; and, no doubt, afford to my enemies a sufficient proof that I feared an investigation of my conduct.”

Rosalie felt the force of these arguments ; but still, that she had eventually been the cause of such trials, filled her bosom with the most painful sensations. The Abbess consoled her with assurances that she did not think the Father, although he had shewn the will, had power to harm them.

"Mine," said she, "is the security of innocence: yet, I will own, there was one sentence uttered by him, of apparent insignificance, that struck me more than all his threats. Did you observe," continued she, addressing herself to Magdalena, "the manner in which he spoke of my having given Rosalie the name of a distant part of my family?"

"I did, Mother; and with no less degree of surprize than yourself; for at that moment his countenance almost bore the expression of a demon. It convinces me that every circumstance has been investigated on which to affix blame. I observed also, that he spoke of the jewels, and required that they should ge given up, for the endowment of the house."

"True," replied the Abbess: "but the

whole sisterhood can witness for me, that they were only given to my care ; and, therefore, cannot be resigned into any other hands : but this reminds me, that you, my Rosalie, have never yet beheld them ; I will fetch the casket hither, and shew them to you."

Rosalie, even amongst the most noble of the Florentine ladies, had never seen any equal in beauty and number to those which were now placed before her. She pressed them successively to her lips and bosom, not because they were beautiful and valuable, but because she supposed them to have been worn by her mother ; and they certainly were the parting bequest of her father.

The Abbess observed these emotions of filial tenderness with delight ; and, pro-

ducing the bracelets, discovered to her view the miniature of her parents, with the paper in which they were folded. Tears fell from the eyes of Rosalie, as with a bent knee she pressed them to her heart. It was a moment of tenderness, grief, and joy, inexpressibly and exquisitely blended together.

“The jewels,” said the Abbess, “are, I believe, safer in my possession than your’s; but the miniatures shall henceforth be your companions; but wear them with discretion. I feared to trust them with you when you went to Florence, lest they should disclose the secret of your father, before the period fixed by himself.”

Rosalie received them with ecstacy, and protested they were too dear to her

to be profaned by a public exhibition of them.

As they were replacing the diamonds in the casket, and attempting to estimate their prodigious value, Rosalie remarked that there was only one bracelet, consisting of an enameled gold chain, with a diamond clasp, to be found. They sought for the fellow to it in vain ; and, as the Abbess was certain as to their having been deposited in safety, they concluded that it must have been left behind through haste, or by mistake.

Rosalie now mentioned the visit she received from the Marquis of Langton, the invitation of Olivia, and the motive, for she mentioned but one, which had induced her to decline it. Unwilling to assume any merit from the duteous prin-

ciple of affection to the Abbess, she alledged only the same reasons she had assigned to the Marquis. The holy Mother could not but approve a determination, dictated by such scrupulous propriety, yet chid her gently for not having made her acquainted with it, before she had decided; adding, that a safe and honourable asylum for her was so much the object of her wishes, that she thought every obstacle would have sunk before that.

A fortnight passed away in uninterrupted tranquillity, and Rosalie began to yield to those enchanting illusions which hope insidiously loves to impress on the youthful mind. She had not seen the terrible Abbot; no circumstance had occurred to renew suspicion; the Abbess had recovered her usual serenity; and

she flattered herself that the power of the Father was limited to his threats. She was seated at the feet of the Abbess, one morning, busily employed in tying up large festoons of artificial flowers, which she had been making to adorn the altar, on an approaching festival, when, without any other ceremony than two loud raps at the door, the Abbot entered the apartment, and stood before them, his features dilated with a smile of malicious joy. In one hand he held a paper, to which he pointed with the forefinger of the other; and, with an air of authority which his gaunt figure and peremptory tone of voice rendered more formidable, he said—

“ I bear in my hand a mandate from our Holy Father the Pope, which suspends Jacquelin Marletto from the

rank of Superior to this house, until the crimes alledged against her have been investigated, and she has proved her innocence. Sister Ursula is appointed to succeed her."

" I suppose, Father," replied the Abbess, calmly, " that you are directed to inform me what those crimes are, that I may know how to prepare my defence."

" This paper enumerates them all," replied he. " I suppose you will be called to Rome, to enter upon your defence in person; and, until that time, you will be under the direction of the pious Abbess Ursula. You are charged," continued he, with a look of horror, and in hollow tremulous accents, " with the suspicion of having given birth to her whom you

call Rosalie de Albertino. Father Sebastiano is named as the partner of your guilt. The enormity of this crime, and its punishment, you know full well. You are, moreover, charged with having broken through the rules of the community, by permitting a stranger to enter the convent, and into the presence of the holy sisters, the better to carry on your hypocritical designs, by an artful tale of woe. And you are required to declare from whence those jewels came which were then produced, and where they are now concealed."

" So wicked a detail," said the Abbess, meekly, " is sufficient to incense the Holy Father the Pope against me, and I yield to his mandate with submission. Who my accusers are, and what their motives, will be discovered ; and the

iniquitous inventors of these calumnies, will be made to tremble."

The features of the Abbot lost their flush of triumph as the firm and dignified look of the Abbess met his eyes. He withdrew them instantly, saying—

"I leave you the paper, and I require your subinission to the regulations of the Superior Ursula."

"I am not to be taught my duty," replied she, "and shall strictly conform to it." And motioning to him to depart, as though she felt his presence an intrusion, he forgot her fallen state in the grandeur of her soul, which could not be obscured, and quitted the room.

On the first entrance of the monk,

Rosalie had sprung from her seat on the floor, and, retiring behind the chair of the Abbess, had supported herself in an attitude of agonized attention. She now threw herself at the feet of the Superior, and, bathing her hands with tears, besought her to suffer her to take the veil.

“I, I am the unhappy cause of all this,” said she; “and the most hateful life, or the most horrible death, would be preferable to what I now endure. Oh! my valued, my adored protectress, let me avert disgrace and evil from you, or I shall perish at your feet!”

Sister Magdalena and the Abbess raised her.

“You can do neither, my child,”

replied the latter ; " but you may remove many pangs from my bosom, by subduing these immoderate transports. I repeat to you that innocence has nothing to fear. A conscious rectitude sits at my heart, and I am invulnerable to the shafts of malice. I can only suffer through you. It is necessary that I should be firm and collected ; but I can be neither, if I see you yield to this excess of grief. Be convinced that I look forward to this trial with cheerfulness, and even pleasure, because it will release you from persecution, as well as remove obloquy from myself. My most bitter enemy could not council me worse, than to advise me to suffer you to take the veil ; since that would sanction every calumny, and affix the imputation of guilt upon my name. Do not you, my Rosalie, be that enemy ! Why, my affectionate Magdalena, do you

thus yield to grief? Ought not you two to be my consolers—my advisers? Where am I to look for either, if you lose all energy of character, and, instead of support, give me only unavailing tears?"

This reproach, so beautifully just, roused the faculties of the weeping Rosalie.

"Oh!" exclaimed she, "I will conquer my sensations: be any thing, every thing, that may console you, dearest, and best of women! You have made me wish to preserve life: it is only valuable to me, as I can serve you."

"I cannot so readily discard my tears, or my sorrows, as this dear child," said Sister Magdalena: "but I feel that you are right; and will endeavour to

lighten your sufferings, instead of adding to their weight. Yet the mortifications Ursula may prepare for you—”

“ Cannot hurt me!” replied the Abbess, interrupting her. “ She may, perhaps, confine me to my cell; but she surely will not deprive me of seeing you and Rosalie; and the rest I esteem as nothing; for, I trust, I have resignation befitting the life I have chosen; and I know that innocence will irradiate even the gloom of a prison.”

Rosalie listened with more than admiration to the saint-like submission of the Abbess. “ Here,” said she, mentally, “ are the lessons of the good Father Sebastiano reduced to practice.”

At this moment, one of the sisters

made her appearance, and, in accents of unfeigned sorrow, meekly expressed her regret at being the bearer of such an order; but that the new Abbess had sent word, a dormitory was prepared, and she wished to take possession of her own apartments.

Neither Magdalena nor Rosalie could repress their indignation at this indecent haste; but the Abbess coolly remarked, that those who had never been accustomed to power were the most likely to abuse it.

“But,” added she, “however ready I am to obey, I shall trespass upon the order, until I have affixed seals to whatever I may leave in these apartments, to which I beg you, my daughters to attend; and that you, Martha, will acquaint your

new Superior that I have done so, in your presence; and that I require I may find them unbroken, when I take possession of them again."

Sister Martha bowed with reverence, and the Abbess said—

" You, my daughter, were the porteress at the gate, nearly fifteen years ago, when this child was introduced into the convent. One of the charges against me is, that I suffered a stranger to enter into the interior of the convent. To my ignorance of his having gained admission, you will, of course, speak, if you are called upon?"

The nun crossed herself.

" Holy mother!" exclaimed she, " is

it possible that my indiscretion can have occasioned so much mischief to you ? Overcome by the cries of a beautiful cherub, and the affecting supplications of a stranger, who told me that destruction pursued him, the pleadings of humanity opposed my powers of resistance, and he rushed by me. This dereliction from my duty could not pass unnoticed by you, and you reproved me for it, in the presence of the sisterhood : but your reproofs were mingled, as they always are, with the blessed sentiments of benevolence ; and I remember that you told me, an error such as mine, committed through an excess of charity, had mercy for its advocate. Oh, mother ! " crossing her hands devoutly on her bosom. " Your virtues will be exhibited more fully by this trial ; and I shall live to see you restored to the sorrowing community.

who dare only weep in secret, and offer up their prayers in silence, for your safety."

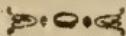
Gratified by this general testimony of regret and affection, the Abbess cheerfully followed Sister Martha to a dormitory at the top of a spiral staircase, which had been allotted to Rosalie in her infancy, because it was retired, airy, and commodious. She was pleased to find that she was to become the inhabitant of this room, while to the afflicted Rosalie and Magdalena, it suggested fearful expectations. Sister Martha, as she respectfully withdrew, said, with a look that sufficiently indicated the sorrow she felt, that the Abbess was required not to leave her apartment, without permission.

It was evident to Magdalena, that

Ursula durst not proceed to extremities with the Abbess, as her malignity would have led her to the exercise of every rigour. Day after day passed on without any news arriving from Rome, and she began to suspect that, fearful he could not substantiate the charges exhibited against her, the Abbot was carrying on some new intrigue, to prevent the affair from being brought to an hearing.

CHAPTER III.

"The fortunate can want no kindred, and the poor find none."



As Rosalie was seated one morning by the side of her beloved protectress, giving way to the flattering hopes she had conceived from this delay, she received an order to attend Ursula in her parlour; who addressing her with an air of austere

solemnity, informed her that she must immediately prepare to enter upon her noviciate.

A command so peremptorily given, and from Ursula, had the effect of inspiring Rosalie with courage ; and she answered, with firmness, that she could not be prevailed upon to make any preparation for a life she was decidedly averse to ; and besought that she might be importuned no more on the subject, as this was her final determination.

Although internally enraged that her new authority extorted no further submission, she concealed her anger as much as possible, and began to represent it as the only eligible life for a young woman who was without friends or protectors, or the means of support.

Rosalie waited with respect for the conclusion of a long and stupid harangue, which Ursula conceived to be a most convincing piece of oratory, and then calmly replied, that as she neither believed herself destitute of friends or fortune, the arguments she had been using were not in the least applicable to her.

"Not destitute of friends?" exclaimed Ursula, thrown off the restraint of moderation which she had imposed upon herself. "Not destitute of friends! Who and what are you then? and why is there a mystery about your birth?"

"The severe measures which have been taken by the Father Abbot, to elucidate those mysteries, must render any enquiries from me unnecessary," replied Rosalie.

"Take care," replied Ursula, "that you do not experience measures more severe yourself. It is well known to whom your rebellious spirit is to be ascribed: and unless it can be brought to bend with more compliance, you will be totally excluded from society so dangerous to your present, and eternal welfare."

This was a threat, which conveyed terror to the heart of Rosalie; for she knew that Ursula had the power to confine her, if she could stoop to the baseness of inventing a pretence for it; and banishment from the Abbess, at such a moment of mutual danger and interest, would be insupportable. Ursula beheld with satisfaction the effect produced by this intimation; and, wishing to consult Father Beneditto on the expediency of

putting it in execution, she dismissed Rosalie, who gladly obeyed her command to retire, and hastened to the dormitory, in the utmost consternation.

The Abbess, who was prepared to expect every mortification which could be offered to her, and whose fortitude was supported by that resignation which religious faith only can bestow, heard the intention of Ursula without surprize; and, feeling conscious that it would soon be realized, she exhorted Rosalie to endure confinement with patience, and to resist every attempt to fetter her inclinations. She observed, that their fate was now as intimately interwoven by artifice, as it was by affection ; and that her restoration to her former office, to which she looked forward with the fullest confidence, would instantly liberate her from confinement.

She particularly cautioned her not to give credit to any messages or letters, which were given her, unless they were delivered by Sister Magdalena; and bade her remember, that were she to be intimidated into a compliance, it would impede, rather than assist, her cause.

They sat conversing thus, until the last bell announced the hour for the sisters to retire to rest. As the sweet affections of the heart cannot always be repressed, tears accompanied their parting embrace; yet were their minds fortified by virtue, to a calm endurance of the sufferings which awaited them.

On reaching her apartment, Rosalie found a nun waiting at the door, who told her she had orders to lock it upon her.

"Am I to be a close prisoner?" asked Rosalie.

"I believe not," replied the nun; "for I am ordered to open the door in time for you to attend the matin service."

The turning of the key struck heavily on the heart of Rosalie; but she threw herself on her knees, and in prayer to him, who alone can lighten the pressure of affliction, soothed her perturbed spirits.

In the morning, the same nun unlocked her door, and, bidding her attend Mother Ursula as soon as the duties of prayer were over, instantly retired.

Just as she had disappeared, Sister

Magdalena approached, who was unacquainted with what had occurred, having been stationed the whole of the preceding day with a nun, who was confined to her cell by illness. Rosalie had only a moment to relate her situation, and to suggest the cruel necessity of Magdalena's visiting her with caution, lest she should be prohibited the enjoyment of her only remaining comfort.

She found the terrible Father Benedetto in the parlour of the Abbess.

" You have been summoned here," said Ursula, " that I might acquaint you, that henceforth you are interdicted from holding any intercourse with Jacqueline, late Abbess of *St. Agnese*. Should you attempt to infringe upon this injunction in the least degree, you will be removed

to a remote cell, and no one will approach you, but the nun who conveys you sustenance. In the mean time, I entreat that the admonitions of the holy Father may unite with mine, to save you from the perdition which awaits you, should you quit these walls, and mingle in the world."

"I know my duty too well in this house," replied Rosalie, meekly, "to set at defiance any command of its Superior; you have, therefore, no reason to doubt my obedience, although it inflicts the most painful regret I can suffer."

"Daughter," said the Abbot, and the tone of his voice shook her soul, "I am willing to believe, that obstinacy forms no part of your character. You have been encouraged to rebel; and the good

Mother Ursula consults your welfare, in the restraint she lays upon you."

"I know not how the term, rebellion, can be applied to me," said Rosalie, "who only assert a claim, of which no one has a right to dispossess me."

"By rejecting advice, designed for the salvation of your soul," replied the Father, frowning at her with anger, "you rebel against the duty your religion commands. But expostulations, I see, are vain: I, therefore, tell you," raising his voice, "your designs against the peace of a noble family *shall* be crushed. You have encouraged their children in disobedience: a sin which can only be atoned for, by prayer and penitence."

"I am astonished at a charge," re-

plied Rosalie, “ which both the Marchese and Marchesa know to be unjust. I have rejected the addresses of the Signor Barrazzi, and never will admit them, but with the consent of his parents ; and, as for my sweet Olivia, I know not, nor can I be responsible for, any act of duty, in which she has failed.”

“ If you are sincere, why did you not accept the addresses of the Duke of Altieri ? ” interrogated the Abbot.

“ From the very motives you are so unwilling to allow me, Father,” replied Rosalie. “ Because neither interest nor ambition could tempt me to act contrary to the sentiments of my heart, or the rectitude of my principles.”

As she spoke this, in a firm voice,

and with an air of dignity, Beneditto remained silent for a moment, and the dark hue of his complexion was heightened to what might have been a blush upon the cheeks of another ; but it passed away, and his features became more vengeful than before.

“ Your professions and your actions are at variance,” said he ; “ and you assume an impatience which must be humbled. A spirit uncontrollable as your’s can only be subdued by severity. Know then, that a dispensation of the usual forms has been obtained ; and, at the expiration of a month, if you do not consent to take the veil, your punishment will be such, as hardier spirits than your’s have sunk under.”

Rosalie could not fail of being ap-

palled; yet she betrayed no signs, and remained silent. The Abbot, enraged at a degree of composure which he could not destroy, exclaimed, in a voice which made her start,—

“ Go! impenetrable as you are to admonition, see what you will become by suffering !”

She gladly obeyed the mandate, and, hastily ascending to her apartment, threw herself on a seat, and yielded to an impassioned flood of tears. All the affections of her soul were awakened, all the energy of her character roused, by the horrors of her situation. How dear was every recollection of her past life: how vast the reverse she now experienced! Resistance:—could it avail her? Submission:—that was impossible! Unable

to repress her strong and painful emotions, she sat with her handkerchief held to her eyes, until a soft breathing near her, made her remove it, and she beheld Sister Magdalena standing beside her, who, with her arms crossed, was gazing on her with looks of unutterable anguish.

Rosalie anticipated her enquiries by acquainting her with the scene which had just passed ; and concluded by remarking, that irremediable misery was her own portion ; and that she was doomed to suffer doubly, since every friend she loved and valued seemed involved in her misfortunes. Magdalena could not controvert this opinion ; and was but ill able to give her comfort, having just learnt from the good Sister Martha, that an order would be issued that night, to for-

bid her visits to the Abbess ; who, in future, was to be kept in strict confinement. She was hastening to the dormitory, she said, before the prohibition had arrived, and had called to ask what message she might wish to have conveyed, for the last time.

Rosalie's tears flowed afresh, whilst she gave utterance to the grateful effusions of her full heart. She begged, however, that her maternal friend might not be made acquainted with the extent of her sorrow, but only be told what was her present situation, that she might receive instructions how to act.

Magdalena quitted her, and the hours of her absence, were again devoted to the most poignant reflections on the peculiar severity of her fate. As long as

human resolution and human strength could endure, she resolved, in conformity with the directions of the Abbess, to resist the oppressions that would assail her. But as her long knowledge of monastic life had taught her to what cruel lengths these were sometimes carried, a dreadful although lingering death, was all she had to look forward to; and this, without the consolation, or even hope, of knowing, that it would serve the cause of her benefactress. The return of Sister Magdalena rather cheered her. She said she had brought her words of comfort from the Abbess, and that the whole of their conversation had been spent in devising means for her safety; but, as the hour of refreshment approached, she must be obliged, to defer their communication, until after vespers, when she thought she could remain an hour with her, without

suspicion. She charged her, above all things, to go into the refectory with a composed countenance, and to mix in conversation with the nuns, with an unembarrassed air, in order to elude the observation which might otherwise be made upon her conduct. Rosalie kissed the hand of the affectionate Magdalena, and, pressing it to her palpitating heart, assured her that she would try to obey her injunctions in every particular.

The nuns assembled round her, with inquisitive gaze and questions.—‘ You will then leave us no more,’ said one.—‘ Oh ! the world is full of deceit,’ cried another. ‘ See what you have gained by visiting it ! There is no peace, no happiness, but within the holy walls of a cloyster, and in the exercises of religion.’—‘ How do you know that Rosalie is to

become a nun,' asked a third—' Oh !' replied the first, ' her zeal for admission is so great, that our holy Mother has dispensed with the usual forms, and she is to profess at the end of a month.'

Rosalie preserved the serenity of her looks during this dialogue, and even affected to be attending to, and answering other questions; for an affirmative to such as these, she could not give, and she perceived there would be safety in silence. She was convinced this rumour had been artfully spread by Ursula, and was, no doubt, one of the many manœuvres which would be practised to further the designs which had been formed against her. At all events the nuns had been prepared to believe that the act was voluntary, even if at the last compulsory means were made use of. Sometimes she

thought that she was thus assailed by the sisters, that her silence might be adduced against her, as a tacit compliance; but she adhered to the directions of Magdalena, and retained her first determination. She took her seat at the organ, during evening service, and almost forgot her sorrows, as the solemn peal rolled along the arched roof, and the full chorus of voices ascended from the choir below.

Returned, however, to her own chamber, all her anxious fears returned; and she waited for the appearance of Magdalena with uneasy impatience, lest the door of her apartment should be locked before her arrival. She came not, however, alone; the nun who had the charge of Rosalie entered with her, and her spirits sunk, as she beheld the disappointment of her hopes. But they were soon

revived again, when she heard Magdalena declare, that the compassionate Sister would, under strict injunctions of secrecy, leave them together for an hour.

No sooner were they alone, than she hastened to inform Rosalie, that the Abbess was decidedly of opinion that she should withdraw from the convent, and place herself under the protection of the Marquis and Marchioness of Langton; for that she began to suspect that her own confinement had been clandestinely effected by the Abbot, since she had not received any answer to the letters she had repeatedly written to her friends at Rome, and must believe that they had been intercepted and suppressed. She now felt perfectly convinced that her liberation would take place as soon as

Rosalie was beyond the reach of Beneditto ; for as he had suspended her from her office by his own authority merely, he would dread a discovery by carrying on the deception too long. If these conjectures were well founded, she thought a man capable of going such lengths, would not scruple at the performance of any savage act of tyranny, rather than be disappointed in his aim ; which was evidently to sacrifice Rosalie to the jealousy and resentment of the Marchese. She, therefore, conjured her to consider with Sister Magdalena, how she could effect her escape : and ended her message by declaring, that she could not feel a moment's peace, until she knew her to be beyond his power.

Rosalie thought it impossible to elude the vigilance of Ursula and the

Abbot: but even could that be accomplished, she begged Magdalena to recollect that she knew not whither to direct her steps. The Marquis had declared that they should remain on the confines of Italy, or in Switzerland, but she had neglected to ask him for a direction: how then, could she proceed? Magdalena thought her retreat from the monastery might be effected, by means of one of the peasants in the hamlet, whose family Rosalie was used to clothe, and instruct in their religious duties; and whose gratitude was equal to her kindness. He could conduct her by some path across the Appennines, little known; but she owned that she was at a loss how to proceed, after that, as it seemed scarcely possible to procure information of the place to which Lord and Lady Langton had retired; or to fix upon any

other plan, where she could find a proper and safe asylum.

"I have mentioned to you," said Rosalie, diffidently, "the name of Count Marioni: his melancholy; his un subdued affection; and his friendship for me, because I was a friend of your's. Your nice and delicate sense of propriety forbade me to pursue the subject: but now, that he is the only remaining friend to whom I would apply for assistance, you will permit me to speak of him?"

"His soul," replied Magdalena, "is the mansion, where honour, benevolence, and every other virtue have fixed their abode. Speak freely: I shall rejoice if circumstances authorize you to accept his aid."

"I traced his friendsip for me," con-

tinued Rosalie, - " from the moment in which he learnt that I was beloved by you. He watched over me ever afterwards with solicitous care ; but it was not until his penetration discovered the danger which surrounded me, that he spoke unequivocally of you. To ensure my confidence in him, he then related to me the history of his attachment, and your too ready compliance with the wishes of your mercenary family. He called his heart a widowed one, and said no other object could efface your image there ; and that your fatal haste had doomed him to a life of misery."

Magdalena shed tears for some moments ; when, lifting her streaming eyes to heaven, she besought forgiveness for daring to mix a worldly object in those thoughts which exclusively belonged to her God.

Rosalie, although much affected, proceeded thus.

"I have reason to suppose, that after the violent treatment I experienced from the Marchese, the Signor Barrazzi made him his confidant. Certain it is, that he suspected some evil was intended me, and that he believed it would be attempted on the journey. He told me a guard would accompany me unseen; and urged me, in the most solemn manner, to apply to him, whenever danger threatened me. He said, whenever I should write the word '*Remember*,' which would neither betray my purpose nor excite suspicion if discovered, he would instantly appear and rescue me. May I not, dear and venerated friend, address this word to him? Would he not be the only person to convey me to

the protection of the Marchioness of Langton?"

"Certainly," replied Magdalena with a deep sigh. "My heart, still faithful to its former sentiments, imposes upon my judgement, if he may not safely be trusted."

"My only repugnance to the application," said Rosalie, "is his being the confidant of Leonardo; but when I require him to forbid the approach of Signor Barrazzi, as a man of honour, I know he will do it; for although the Signor's promises to his father extended no farther than whilst I was free from persecution, I shall never deviate from mine, or enter into a family which thinks me unworthy their alliance.

" My dear child," replied Magdalena, " your sentiments, and your determinations, are such as will ensure you the approbation you ought chiefly to aim at—the applause of your own exalted mind. I think I can, with certainty, pronounce, that there will be no difficulty in getting your note conveyed by the hands of the man I have mentioned, who will not betray his trust. But as it will not be safe, for fear of detection, to write more than the word enjoined, how will the Count find means to obtain an interview, to acquaint you with the plan he has concerted for your deliverance?"

" The danger of detection is unquestionably great," replied Rosalie, " and I am hopeless of success; for the Abbot has, no doubt, spies about the convent, and the least movement will excite sus-

picion: but, as something must be risked, we had better trust to the invention of the Count, than send him any particulars which would discover the design, should poor Barnard be seized."

"True," replied Magdalena; "and I will not trust even the name of the Count on the outside of the letter; and then, in case of an accident, we are safe from discovery. As the occupations of Sister Martha frequently lead her to talk with the peasantry, I shall consign to her the necessary instructions to bring Barnard to the grate. Good creature! she has with tears deplored your fate to me; in which she takes the deeper interest, because she considers herself the first person, in the hands of Providence, who, by admitting you into the convent, saved you from former destruction. She is, at

present, high in favour with Ursula, who has, no doubt, some view in taking her into confidence: but it is impossible to shake her strong attachment to the Abbess, or divert the affection she retains towards yourself. She, in fact," added Magdalena, in a melancholy voice, "must see, and arrange every thing with Count Marioni, for I fear I cannot."

" Dear and invaluable friend!" exclaimed Rosalie, throwing her arms round her, " how unfortunate I am, to have awakened recollections in your gentle bosom, so destructive to its peace ! Why am I doomed to destroy the happiness of those, I would lay down my life to serve?"

" My child," replied Magdalena, " it is fit I should punish myself for this re-

maining weakness in my heart. May the relation I am about to give you, be the last proof I ever shew of a crime so heinous in one devoted to the service of her God, as unsubdued affections. Repentant tears must wash away the transgression, and unceasing prayers enable me to conquer myself once more. Yes; I will see him—I will consult him on the means of your deliverance: but I will see him with those sentiments only which become the holy vows I have offered to Heaven.

“ I was daughter of a poor, but noble family, whose only hopes of restoring it to some degree of splendour, rested on the forming of an advantageous alliance for the eldest son. I was indebted to a distant relation for my education, who spared no expence for that purpose, and with whom I lived, surrounded with

every luxury which affluence could bestow. The death of this tender friend, threw me into the midst of my own family, whose affections had been so long estranged from me, that they considered me as an incumbrance.

“ About this time my elder brother married, and his lady had all the pride and insolence which little minds possess, whose only boast is wealth: and as the remnant of the family estate had been settled upon her by the marriage contract, she threw off every appearance of civility, and treated us with little less than disdain. There were three other brothers to be provided for, who entered the army as soldiers of fortune, and who, wanting some assistance, added to the necessities of my family.

“ My father’s increasing infirmities

made him anxious for the disposal of me ; for whom a good establishment, according to the maxims of the world, could not be expected, as I was destitute of fortune. The life of a *religieuse* was, therefore, the only alternative; and he proposed to me to enter a convent.

" At the house of my respectable relation, I had become acquainted with Count Marioni, who was remotely allied to that family, whose title and fortune he now inherits. We were attached to each other by a similiarity of taste and sentiment, and had exchanged vows of unalterable fidelity. He was then in the army ; and, when I communicated to him the designs of my father, he procured leave of absence, and, in person, made proposals for my hand. My father, who, from his experience of poverty,

dreaded it, perhaps, as the worst of human calamities, refused his consent unless the friends of the Signor would sanction his addresses, and make some provision for me. He flew to them, but they were equally influenced by the same prudential motives, and forbade him to unite himself to me. As he was bound by no filial ties, his parents being both dead, he would have sacrificed every prospect of advantage from them, but my father was inexorable.

“ Obliged to join his regiment at the expiration of the period granted him, he left me in a state little short of distraction. I was soon after conveyed to this convent, and my removal was followed by the death of my father. He left me just a sufficiency to pay for my admission as a nun,

but only with the proviso that I took the vows. I was now left desolate: in my brother, or his wife, I had neither friend or protector, nor from any other person any thing to hope or expect: I, therefore, immediately entered upon my novitiate.

“The campaign had commenced some time past, which removed Marioni to a distant kingdom. I had no letters from him: I believed myself forgotten; and, in a sort of fixed despair, which I mistook for the calmness of resolution, I took the vows. The amiable conduct and inestimable virtues of the Abbess had attached me to her. I had seen no one like her since I lost the beloved friend of my youth; and the affections of which my warm heart was capable, were transferred to her. These sentiments,

no doubt, influenced, in some measure, the hasty steps I took.

“ For a time I fancied myself happy; but the arrival of a boarder from the town I had inhabited, too fatally convinced me that my unfortunate passion was not extinguished. She related the return of Marioni in pursuit of me; that he sunk down lifeless on the earth, when he heard that I had taken the vows; and that he then lay in a state of delirium, and was not expected to recover. She added, that two deaths in his family had made him indisputably the next heir to their vast possessions, as well as title.

“ The last part of her relation made no impression upon me. To hear that his affections had out-lived our separation—that he was dying for me, over-

whelmed me with guilty sorrow and despair. I was confined to my bed for two months, and the unremitting tenderness of the Abbess preserved my existence. But oh, my Rosalie! never may you know those struggles which it costs a feeling heart, to tear away an image from that bosom which ought alone to be occupied by its God! My days were spent in fasting, pittance, and remorse : my nights in tears and prayers. At this time, you, my darling Rosalie, were introduced into the convent : my heart adopted you, and in your infant graces, and in cultivating the first fair promises of your genius, I found some relief from the gloom which was stealing over my soul. How often have I formed the resolution to guard you from the possibility of suffering miseries like mine. Still have I shrunk from the task of assigning my

reasons, whilst I have been studiously forming the means to prevent it. It has, however, been decreed that you should learn my history by the intervention of circumstances so extraordinary, that it seems intended as a warning.

“I have now only to add, that by way of expiation, for these tears of sad remembrance, it behoves me to subdue the treacherous feelings which have lurked within my bosom; for until I can meet Count Marioni, without anguish or agitation, I am a traitor to my religion, and a reproach to myself.”

What were the keenness of Rosalie’s sensations during this recital? Magdalena seemed to her like a suffering saint, whose arms were mercifully extended to snatch her from destruction. She, how-

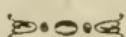
ever, checked her tears, and endeavoured, as much as possible, to suppress her emotion. The compassionate expressions which rose to her lips died away before she could pronounce them, and her looks only, explained to Magdalena the pity and admiration which glowed in her bosom.

The deep-toned bell, which tolled the hour of midnight, informed Magdalena that the friendly nun would soon be at the door; she, therefore, briefly told Rosalie, that she would see Sister Martha the next morning, and settle with her respecting Barnard; and that, to avoid suspicion, she would neither come to her apartment during the following day, nor engage with her in conversation when they accidentally met.

They now bade each other adieu; for the nun was heard cautiously unlocking the door, which was immediately closed again upon Rosalie.

CHAPTER IV.

" Then, in his fixed and ardent gaze,
Such terror you might see,
As when we almost wish to shun
The thing we wish to see."



ONCE more left alone, the horrors of her situation, so faithfully pictured by the story of Magdalena, now rose more

fully to the view of Rosalie than ever. Her blood chilled, and her heart seemed to have lost its pulsations, whilst she reflected on the fate which awaited her, should she not be able to elude it by flight. She clasped her hands in agony, and unconsciously called upon Leonardo. His name shot through her whole frame, and recalled the glow of animation into her pale cheek. How vainly had she endeavoured to persuade herself that her affections could be regulated at will, or annihilated by terror. Alas! she found his idea mixed in every sensation, and forming a part of her very existence. The generosity of his attachment, his confidence in her, ought they not to inspire her with resolution to resist the tyranny of that compulsion which would for ever bury his hopes in the cold grave of love, prepared for her? If her escape

should be frustrated, she had to depend solely on the energy of her mind ; and she pledged to him, or rather to his ideal image, her solemn faith, that she would endure every evil, rather than the one she most dreaded.

Some days had elapsed before Magdalena could find a safe opportunity to inform her, that every necessary document had been given to Barnard ; that she had written the word '*Remember*,' and the note was deposited within the lining of his hat. He had given out in the hamlet, that he was going to attend a sick relation, and should probably be absent a week ; and that his departure had not excited the least suspicion.

The Lady Abbess, although a close prisoner in her little dormitory, supported

her spirits with a magnanimous disdain of the artifices which her enemies were practising against her. She had no dread for her own safety ; but for the fate of Rosalie, she, indeed, felt the most anxious solicitude. She had, through the means of Sister Magdalena, the last evening they had seen each other, supplied her with money to defray the expences of the journey, and, in some measure, to preserve her from pecuniary obligations to the Marchioness of Langton ; and she had also given hints, of the highest importance, relating to some intricate passages, which she had to traverse through the convent, in her escape. As she sat one evening ruminating on this subject, and calculating how long it might be before her departure would take place, she heard some voices at the door, and, the key being turned, Father Beneditto stood before her.

"The perverseness of Rosalie," said he, "at last yields, and she will soon take the veil."

"I protest against such rash measures," replied the Abbess. "I received a solemn injunction from her father, to preserve her for her family until she was eighteen. Until that period I hold myself responsible; and, after it, I shall consider myself, in the words he used, 'the sole arbitress of her fate.' My conscience is engaged for the performance of this sacred promise; and I warn you against an interference, which may even shake your own authority."

The Father smiled contemptuously. "I came not to discuss a matter already resolved upon, and nearly accomplished," said he; "my business is to demand the

jewels which are in your possession. They are under the authority of this house, of which you are no longer the head."

"The jewels were, alike, given to me in trust," replied the Abbess; "and never will I relinquish them, except to Rosalie. When she becomes eighteen, they are her's. If a religious life should, unconstrainedly, be her choice, she will undoubtedly endow this convent with them; otherwise they will procure for her an eligible establishment, wherever she chooses to fix."

"And her age, at present—what is it?" demanded the Father, categorically.

"She will arrive at the age of

eighteen, in ten months," replied the Abbess.

" And you think yourself justified in detaining the jewels?" asked Ursula, who had not yet spoken.

" I not only think myself justified;" said the Abbess, " but also, feel that I should act a part which would for ever disgrace my exalted situation, if I suffered them to go from me, into any other hands."

" You must then be compelled to deliver them," said the enraged Abbot.

" Never, but with my life!" answered the Abbess; " and I protest against such force as robbery. For the time will soon arrive, that I shall have an opportunity

of laying all the iniquities, which have been practised against me, at the feet of our most Holy Patriarch,"

Raging with fury, at being opposed with such determined coolness and resolution, the Father hastily quitted the dormitory, and descended a flight of steps, which led to an open corridor, from whence he could gain access to the garden.

The fineness of the evening had tempted Rosalie to leave her apartment, and indulge in a solitary walk. She had directed her steps to a lofty terrazzo which ran across the garden, on which grew a majestic chesnut-tree, whose wide-spreading branches, now clothed with the soft green of its early expanding foliage, formed a lofty canopy in the cen-

tre, whilst in various places the slender boughs almost swept the ground, and formed a sort of screen to a rustic seat. From this spot, the pointed summits of the Appennines; the broken and stupendous acclivities of their sides; and the frowning shadows projected over their base, were seen in all their native grandeur, since no other object intervened to oppose their effect, or divide the attention of the beholder. It was a retirement almost sacred in the estimation of Rosalie, for the terrazzo led to the cemetery belonging to the convent; and through an arched gateway at one end of it, lay the nearest road to the monastery of White Dominicans; and here, in her childhood, she was used to await the approach of the good Father Sebastiano; receive his lessons, and listen to his precepts. These happy days recurred to her imagination.

She opposed to them her present sufferings, and the contrast filled her eyes with tears. To the loss of this excellent friend she ascribed all the misery which she endured. His death had made room for a successor, whose persecutions were more demoniacal than human, since they were unprovoked, and yet he had determined on her destruction.

She next adverted to the return of Barnard; and her heart throbbed between fear and hope, at the success of his expedition. Perhaps, thought she, amidst some of those dark recesses of the mountains, the Count, even at this moment, may be following the foot-steps of his guide, and I might see him, could my eyes penetrate them. Perhaps 'ere another sun may gild these mountain tops with its last rays, I may be far, far distant

from this spot. She gazed in mournful sadness at their bright summits. I am then about to quit all these objects, exclaimed she, mentally, so long endeared to me. To quit, for ever, that asylum where my father placed me: dear, unhappy parents! taking the miniatures from her bosom, and pressing them to her lips, your misfortunes seem entailed upon your child: too sure they ended, or the offspring on whom you bestowed such care at parting, would not have been deserted. Overwhelmed by these reflections, she gave free indulgence to her tears, her humid eyes still fixed upon the portraits.

She was soon roused by the loud and imperious voice of the Father Abbot; and starting, beheld his terrific visage over her shoulder.

" Daughter! Daughter!" exclaimed he, " is it thus you profane heaven, by paying adoration to an earthly image? Blush at the duplicity of your conduct; for well I know whose the resemblance must be, which you thus devour with kisses."

" I am too much offended by your insinuation," said she, rising with dignity, " to affect to misunderstand you; but it is as unfounded, as it is indecent."

" Give me the portrait?" said he, with commanding sternness. " I will have it."

" No," said she, with collected voice and manner: " you shall not dispossess me of a treasure, which I prize more

highly than any thing the world can bestow upon me in their stead; but as you have sullied the purity of my character, by your accusations, I will so far defend myself, and give you cause for self-reproach, as to tell you, that the miniatures you saw are portraits of my parents."

" Of your parents!" repeated he with an incredulous look. " Where then is your veracity, or that of the Superior? Have you not both protested that you knew them not?"

" Of their names, and the certainty of their existence, we are ignorant; but their resemblances may assist me in tracing them out; and I, therefore, preserve them with the most dutious care."

" If you speak truth, shew them to me?" said the Father, impatiently.

" Not until I have your solemn promise, that you will not attempt to wrest them from me," answered she.

" By the holy vows, which I have taken, I will not," said he, extending his hand to receive them.

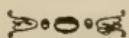
" I will not part from them," said Rosalie; " but, here, you may behold them;" and she held them close enough, for him to distinguish the features.

The extended arm of the Father, dropped nerveless by his side; he started with wild horror and affright: his eyeballs seemed starting from their sockets; his lips quivered; and his whole frame

seemed convulsed. Casting upon her a look of undefinable expression, he rushed past her; and traversing the terrazzo with rapid but unequal strides, at length disappeared through the arched gateway.

CHAPTER V.

“ Now, from her bosom, gentle Hope
Withdrew her genial ray;
And Sorrow sat triumphant there,
And frown’d the smiles away.”



THE mortification and disappointment, experienced by the Marchese and Marchesa, pressed heavy on their spirits.

The melancholy of their son, only so far alarmed them, as it seemed to threaten his health; but it neither effected a change in their sentiments, or softened their bosoms into compassion. Their palazzo, which used to attract the most brilliant assemblage in Florence, now seldom echoed to the sounds of harmony, or afforded scenes of gay festivity. The Marchesa only saw her most intimate friends, and the Marchese, almost exclusively devoted his evenings to play, which had ever been his favourite pursuit. Count Marioni and Lord Villers were constant visitors; but the former devoted his sole attentions to Leonardo, and the latter was now received with a degree of reserve, which almost forbade his approach. Olivia did not fail to ascribe this alteration to a suspicion of their attachment; and Lord Villers was so much

chilled by it, that he did not dare to make his proposals, lest he should be thrown into despair, by a rejection of his suit.

At this crisis, Signor Guanana returned to Florence. He had been summoned to Rome by his uncle, the Cardinal, who had received him with high displeasure, and insisted upon the performance of his engagements with Olivia Barrazzi. As his sole dependence was upon this uncle, he obeyed the mandate, flew back to Florence, and paid his addresses to Olivia, with the same volatility he had done to Rosalie.

Lord Villers now saw that there was not a moment to be lost; and, disclosing his sentiments to Leonardo, besought his interest with the Marchese. Signor Bar-

razzi, who cordially esteemed this young nobleman, assured him that his sister could not have made a choice more gratifying to his heart, and that he thought the Marchese would feel flattered by an alliance with him. He smiled at his fears of a successful rival in Signor Guanana, whose character, he said, was so frivolous, that his father certainly would never consent to intrust the happiness of his daughter to his care.

Thus supported, Lord Villers determined to request an audience with the Marchese the following morning; and, as if fortune was also determined to favour his designs, he that night received an express from England, announcing the death of two of his cousins by a malignant fever, by which he became next in succession to the Dukedom of Dum-

barton. Valuing the accession of this dignity no farther than as it gave hopes for the accomplishment of his happiness, he early attended the Marchese. After having declared his passion for Olivia, which was heard patiently, though coolly, he mentioned the honours which had newly befallen him. The Marchese started from his chair as the name of the Duke of Dumbarton was mentioned; and a few hasty inarticulate words escaped him, which, as far as Lord Villers could distinguish, expressed a dislike to his family. He soon, however, resumed his former manner, and, in cool but civil terms, replied that he had other views for his daughter; and, if even that were not the case, he never would have consented to her marrying an Englishman. Lord Villers pleaded his suit with eloquence and energy, and offered to submit to any

terms the Marchese would propose ; but the reply was again cold and laconic—‘ No terms whatever would induce him to give his consent.’

Leonardo, from a reciprocity of his feeling, entered into the sufferings of his friend, but he could hold out no farther encouragement, than what might arise from time, “ which,” said he, with a faint smile, “ is my own antidote against despair.”

The following morning Olivia was summoned to the *boudoir* of the Marchesa, who informed her, that preparations would be immediately made for her marriage with Signor Guanana. That it was the Marchese’s will that she should receive him as her affianced husband ; and that he, moreover, required from her

a promise, that she would neither see nor correspond with Lord Villers.

Olivia threw herself at her mother's feet, and besought her to intercede with the Marchese not to doom her to so miserable a state, as that of a union with Signor Guanana. She protested that he was her aversion ; and that so far from having a regard for her, she knew him to be passionately attached to Rosalie.

A blush of proud indignation tinged the cheek of the Marchesa, and she reprobated her daughter's disobedience in terms of the greatest severity. She said the marriage was determined upon, and her withholding her consent would be of no avail, for that measures would be found to compel her to submission : and

added, that as it was apparent that she had bestowed her affections upon a man equally the aversion of her father, she should remain a close prisoner in her own apartment, until she came out of it a bride.

Olivia offered to bind herself by the most solemn promises to renounce Lord Villers, if her father would desist from urging her to marry Signor Guanana ; but the Marchesa, enraged almost beyond expression at her attempting to stipulate with her father, in a peremptory tone, bade her retire to her own apartment, and not to quit it without permission. On this conversation being repeated to him, the offended Marchese vowed to see his daughter no more, until she yielded implicit obedience to his will ; a resolution which, perhaps, gave the less regret

to Olivia, as she shrunk with terror at the idea of the violence of his wrath.

In the evening the Marchesa sent her word by Margaurita to prepare for a visit from Signor Guanana. She heard his professions in silence ; and then, candidly avowing to him that her heart was irrevocably another's, besought him to withdraw his suit, and relieve her from the persecutions she was suffering on his account.

Signor Guanana possessed much of that thoughtless vivacity which is generally termed good humour, but very little feeling or generosity. The threats of the Cardinal still vibrated in his ears, and the deprivation of his treasures was, in his estimation, a much worse alternative than marrying a woman he did not care

for, or who felt a predilection in favour of another. He had fancied himself violently in love with Rosalie ; but, in fact, the admiration of others had influenced him more than his own discriminating power to appreciate her excellencies ; and the moment the mandate of his uncle was unequivocally made known, she was dismissed from her empire in his bosom, and almost from his memory. When he returned to the Marchesa, he related with accurate veracity the reception he had met with, but gaily added that '*Perseverance*' was his motto ; and that in time he hoped to obtain that preference which was at present bestowed upon another.

The Marchesa, delighted to find him so conformable to their wishes, gave him the strongest assurances that Olivia

should become his, as soon as the necessary preliminaries could be settled; and he left her elated with that sort of hope, which a selfish mind enjoys, when temporizing with interest, instead of happiness.

Margaurita, at night, informed Olivia that she had been appointed by the Marchesa to attend upon her; and that the keys of her chamber were to be conveyed to her lady, when she left her.

"I see I am to be treated ungenerously," said Olivia; "and that I must consider you as my gaoler, Marguarita."

"Me, Signora? Heaven forbid!" exclaimed she; "but I durst not refuse my Lady Marchesa, and so I told Laura when she cried so much about it: for

said I, as for locking up people that are minded to come together, its a very foolish piece of business; and if I was served so myself, I should jump out of the window at once: so that I wish my lady would not believe better of me than I deserve, and put me into a trust that I should think it no sin to break."

Olivia could not forbear smiling at this simple unsophisticated mode of reasoning in a benevolent mind; and also, at the unsubstantial barriers which the Marchesa had opposed between her and liberty. She thanked Marguarita for her implied kindness; but assured her, that she had no intention to transgress against the commands of the Marchesa, in the smallest degree.

The next day, Signor Guanana visit-

ed her again, accompanied by the Marchesa. His good spirits seemed inexhaustible, and he addressed to her a profusion of compliments, to which she could only oppose a degree of reserve that evidently displeased her mother. She learnt from them that they were to attend a splendid entertainment, given that evening, at the Palazzo de Pitti; which, so far from affording her the mortification which was intended, only gave her room to anticipate an uninterrupted enjoyment of her solitude and her sorrows. She heard the carriages quit the palazzo; and as she stood leaning over her harp, which vibrated a few chords in unison with the melancholy abstraction of her thoughts, Marguarita entered the room, looking significantly, as much as to say 'I have a pleasure in store for you;' and was immediately followed by

Leonardo. Olivia threw herself into the arms of her brother, and shed tears on his bosom. He pressed her closely to his heart, and kissing her cheek, said—

“ The times are severe, my Sister, when even I am obliged to steal into your presence, and owe my admission to the compassion of a domestic.”

Soothed by his fraternal kindness, she soon assumed composure enough to speak of her sorrows, and ask his advice. Their situation, although similar in some respects, bore no proportion in suffering. Leonardo, notwithstanding he was disappointed in his schemes of felicity, was neither excluded from hope, nor compelled to encounter positive misery. Whilst Olivia, by marrying a man who was little less than the object of her

hatred, would be devoted to wretchedness in the extreme, which admitted no gleam of respite: no end, but with the termination of life !

This consideration weighed deeply on the mind of Leonardo, and he mentioned it with the energy of feeling proportioned to his affection. He said that the Marquis of Langton had applied to him, and urged him to save them both from destruction ; and that he had accordingly remonstrated with the Marchese, but without effect. He next attempted to procure her release from confinement, and offered to pledge himself that the Marquis should quit Italy, and that his sister would hold no further correspondence with him, if they would allow of her rejection of Signor Guanana. This proposition had drawn upon him

the reproach of wishing to encourage her disobedience; and the conference had ended with a prohibition not to visit her; a command, he said, which he conceived more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

He consoled her with hopes that such rigorous measures could only be adopted from the expectation that they would over bear all the opposition she could make against them. He, therefore, recommended to her to be firm, though calm; and to leave no means unessayed to move the compassion of the Marchesa: but should she be driven to such extremities as he himself could not endure, he charged her to remember that she had a brother, who, at any risk, would protect her from being made a wretch for life.

He next spoke of Rosalie, and ex-

pressed his dread that she might be in a no less perilous situation than herself; but his hopes, he said, rested on the firmness of her character, and the promises she had given to him. Olivia assured him that whatever her destiny might prove, if it gave her a will to act, the care of Rosalie should be her first and dearest object.

Three hours had stolen unperceived away, when Margaurita entered, and, expressing her fears that the Marchesa might return, requested the Signor to retire. They then parted, with mutual expressions of regret and affection; and, soon after, the Marchesa looked into the apartment, but did not enter, saying, she had company to supper.

The next day, while Margaurita was attending on Olivia—

" Dear Signora," said she, " can I be acting wrong, in serving you and deceiving my Lady Marchesa, when it is all for the love of mercy? A thousand, and a thousand times I have been minded to deliver up the keys, and tell her my conscience wont let me be employed in such cruel proceedings: but then, she would put somebody in my place, who would be as unfeeling as herself; and then, I might as well have no conscience at all. I can't think why my Lady Marchesa thinks me better fitted for these employments than her other women? But she is always telling me how steady I am: and, to be sure, I am silent when she talks, and always observe what she says; for I know my duty. And then, it is so fine a thing, to know that one means to act for the best, as I am sure I

am going to do, Signora, in what I am about to tell you."

" Your conduct towards me, my good Margaurita," replied Olivia, " proves, indeed, the excellency of your heart; for neither our religious, nor our moral, duties direct us to join in oppression: on the contrary, they inculcate humanity, and the divine precept of doing to others as you would be done by yourself."

" Dear Signora! That is exactly what I was thinking: for if any person was plotting such mischief against me, and another person heard it, and would not tell me, surely it would not only be heart-hearted but wicked?"

" Have you heard any plot that is carrying on against me? Speak, I conjure

you!" exclaimed Olivia, with trembling impatience.

" Why yes, indeed, Signora ; and I am going to tell you the whole of it, just as if I was confessing to Father Baptista. When I had finished dressing my Lady Marchesa this morning, she sent me into the bed-chamber, to trim a scarf for her, against the assembly this evening ; and, soon after, my Lord Marchese came into the dressing room : and, to be sure, my Lady Marchesa must have forgot she had sent me into the bed-room ; and, the door being a little open, I heard every thing they said, as plainly as you do me, Signora."

" And what did they say?" asked Olivia.

" A great deal about you, Signora, and Lord Villers, and Signor Guanana. My Lady Marchesa said, at last, that she was sure it would never be possible to prevail upon you to marry the Signor, you were so obstinately in love, I think that was the word, with Lord Villers. And then my Lord Marchese spoke very angrily, indeed ; and said he would force you to become his wife. But my Lady Marchesa said that could not be done in this palazzo, for that Signor Barrazzi would prevent it. So then my Lord Marchese told her that he would send to the monastery on the Appennines, where I was sent with the sweet Signora Rosalie, to fetch Father Beneditto, who, he said, would do any thing he required of him. That he and my Lady Marchesa would remove to *Monto Marco*, and take you with them, and he would have Fa-

ther Beneditto to meet them there ; and that, in the chapel of the castle, they could use what force was necessary, as there would be no witnesses. And he said, after you were once married, you could do no otherwise than make the best of it. And so then it was agreed between them, that in less than a month you should become the wife of Signor Guanana."

" Is it possible that my father and mother can mean to treat their child with so much cruelty?" exclaimed Olivia, whilst tears gushed from her eyes.

" Cruelty indeed, Signora ! I am sure it made my heart as heavy as lead to listen to it. However, as soon as they had settled it all, I began to fear that my Lady Marchesa might recollect where I

was, and make me give her a promise never to speak of it; and then, you know, Signora, I could not have told you of it, as it would have been wicked to have broken a promise: so I crept out of the room, as softly as I could, and glad I was that I could give you warning of it all, without being guilty of any sin."

The simplicity of Margaurita's observations, and the honesty of heart she displayed, excited both the admiration and gratitude of Olivia, who assured her that she would repay her kindness.

"Pay me, Signora!" said Margaurita. "I hope you wont attempt it; for it would make me afraid I had done wrong, and that I was paid for breaking my duty. Mine is pure good will; which is above being bought."

Olivia explained to her that she meant only she should return her kindness, when she had the power; and with this Margaurita was satisfied.

The next morning the Marchesa brought her work, and sat with Olivia some time. Her manners were more conciliating than they had been; and she avoided speaking on any disagreeable topic. Delighted with this condescension, Olivia was almost tempted to suspect that Margaurita might have been deceived, until the Marchesa, in a seemingly careless manner, mentioned that the Marchese talked of going soon to *Monto Marco*. Olivia felt her whole frame tremble; but, as the Marchesa did not look at her, she soon assumed composure enough to ask, when they were to remove? Very shortly, she replied; but

their stay would not be long : only to inspect some alterations, which were intended to be made, and that they should take but few domestics, and not remove their household. Here the conversation ended ; and, soon after, the Marchesa retired.

The intention of this visit was but too apparent to Olivia ; and she was equally well aware, that the intimation of their journey to *Monto Marco*, was given to her thus early, in order to lull her suspicions, at the time of their departure. The increasing danger of her situation filled her eyes with tears ; and she resolved to ask an interview with Leonardo, the first moment she could do it with safety. Her reflections were now poignantly painful ; and she almost sunk under the dreadful apprehension that her fate was inevitably fixed.

Margaurita found her absorbed in the deepest melancholy, when she came with her dinner, of which she could not prevail upon her to eat a morsel. Some time after she had taken the dinner things away, she returned with a little dessert; and, placing it before her, begged she would eat some of the iced fruit. Gratified by this mark of attention in her attendant, she promised, with a faint smile of acknowledgment, that she would do so; and, taking a peach from the dish, she found a letter underneath it, addressed to herself. The hand-writing betrayed the author, and she opened it with tremulous haste. It was from the Marquis of Langton. He painted his misery in the strongest colours; and besought her to give him an interview the following evening, when he knew the Marchese and Marchesa would be engaged at a

gala, to be given at a distant villa. Margaurita, he said, had promised to conduct her to a balcony, which overlooked the lawn. He reminded her of the affections they had pledged to each other, and solemnly asseverated, that he had determined not to survive a breach of it on her part : and ended by declaring, that if she refused his request, she would drive him to despair.

At such a moment, when hope had receded from her view, and misery usurped her place, this letter was calculated to awaken every tender sentiment of her bosom, and plead powerfully to its predominant sensation. She determined to see the Marquis. Could she refuse his last request?—Impossible! She broke no confidence, for no trust had been reposed in her; although she had been

treated with as much severity, as if she had failed in that duty, which she had never yet broken. The longer she dwelt on the evils which encompassed her, the more she was strengthened in the resolutions she had formed; and when Margaurita re-entered her apartment, she avowed her intentions, but begged of her to apprise the Marquis of it, for fear any letter from herself should be intercepted. She accordingly met him at the appointed time, accompanied by Margaurita; and his ardent pleadings were so powerfully seconded by her terrors, at the compulsion which was to be practised at *Monto Marco*, that she consented to quit her father's palazzo, and become his at the first place where the marriage ceremony could be performed. Olivia, however, stipulated that Rosalie should be the companion of her flight;

and readily prevailed upon the Marquis, to convey her to some place, through which they were to pass, there to wait their arrival. She wished her brother to be made acquainted with their intention, being convinced that he would throw no obstacle in the way of it; but the Marquis was of opinion, that it would be more generous to leave him in ignorance of their plan, lest the knowledge of it should subject him to the reproaches of the Marchese. To the propriety of this idea Olivia could not but assent; and as the Marquis dreaded the removal of the family to *Monto Marco*, from whence her escape might be more difficult, should it take place sooner than the Marchesa had hinted, he prevailed upon her to be in readiness to accompany him the evening after his return from *St. Agnese*, for which place he was determined to set out that

very night. Margaurita, who had kept a respectful distance, now perceiving that they were about to separate, approached, and humbly solicited to be permitted to attend Signora Olivia to England. The proposal delighted both her and the Marquis of Langton; and they both assured her, that such a proof of attachment should be rewarded as it deserved. Olivia, however, begged of her to question herself strictly, whether she felt convinced that she should not repent quitting her native country; for, added she,—

“ Although I would send you back, the moment you wished it, yet you could not, perhaps, return with so much credit, or be received into the Marchesa’s household, or that of any of her friends.”

“ I have debated it all, Signora,”

said she, “ and my resolution is fixed ; for here I could not remain without suspicion ; and I could not deny the having done a thing which I thought right : so my discharge would follow, of course.”

Olivia agreed in this remark ; and added, that she was pleased to find that her inclination concurred with her interest ; as they should think they could never sufficiently reward her kindness.

The days, during the absence of the Marquis, passed slowly and uncomfortably with Olivia. She was obliged to receive the constant visits of Signor Guanana, who was generally accompanied by the Marchesa. His self-complacency, and the air of successful triumph which he assumed, disgusted her so much that she with difficulty preserved the com-

posed countenance and manners, which she had prescribed to herself.

Margaurita came to her one morning, and, with affrighted looks, told her that preparations for their journey to *Monto Marco* had absolutely commenced. It was but the sixth day since the departure of Lord Langton, and wanted nearly three weeks of the time mentioned by the Marchesa. Something, therefore, must have happened to accelerate their plan: and this, in fact, was the case; for the Marchesa could not but feel mortified at the inquiries which were perpetually addressed to her after Olivia. They seemed to her as so many tacit reproaches for the confinement, which she must be known to suffer. She had, besides, remarked a change in her behaviour, which indicated, she thought, less aversion to

Signor Guanana; and both these considerations had induced her to beg of the Marchese to lose no further time in putting their designs in practice.

The consternation of Olivia increased as night approached; for, from the accounts of Margaurita, she dreaded that the intended journey might commence at day-light.

At length Margaurita entered the apartment; and her countenance discovered that she had satisfactory intelligence to impart. She had seen Lord Langton, who always came to her in disguise. With a degree of caution suitable to the danger of the undertaking, he had procured horses from a distant town, to mislead a first inquiry: and his carriage and three servants, well armed, were

stationed in an hollow way, in the environs of Florence. Margaurita had fixed that they should escape through the portico that opened on the lawn. She had secured the key of the saloon, and gone softly and unbarred the window shutters, whilst the closing of the doors, as the servants retired to rest, made the noise the less observable. In locking the door of the Signora's apartment, she had taken care to avoid fastening it, and delivered the key in the usual way to the Marchesa in her dressing room; who now, for the first time, announced to her, that at the hour of eleven, the following day, they should depart for *Monto Marco*.

As soon as silence was completely restored through the palazzo, Margaurita stole quietly to the chamber of Olivia; and, conducting her through the saloon,

for her trembling limbs would scarcely support her, they were met by the Marquis, who was in waiting, accompanied by a faithful English servant. They traversed the lawn with quick and light footsteps; and, passing through the streets without noise, soon came within sight of the carriage, which Olivia, Lord Langton, and Margaurita ascended; and the environs of Florence soon receded from their view.

It was now that the Marquis acquainted Olivia with the event of his unsuccessful embassy. She shed tears of disappointment; but he chased them away, by declaring, they were to wait in one of the frontier towns, until Rosalie could join them.

The flight of Olivia was not dis-

covered until a late hour, as the Marchesa believed that Margaurita was engaged in making preparations for the journey; and, therefore, had not appeared, as usual, for the key of Olivia's apartment. When every thing was nearly ready for their departure, she herself took the key; and her consternation was dreadful, when she found the door already open. With fearful expectation, she rushed into the bed-room, which was vacant, and perceived the bed had not been slept in the preceding night. Darting into the library, where she had left the Marchese, she communicated to him, in accents of the most bitter anguish, the discovery she had made, and the dreadful conviction it had given her of Olivia's escape. Scarcely could they believe that a daughter of theirs could be guilty of so degrading an action; for

the keeping her a prisoner, was intended more to excite her terror than secure her from a step, which their pride made them think it was impossible for her to take.

When Margaurita was not to be found, the mortification of the Marchesa could only be exceeded by the fury of her Lord. He summoned Leonardo to his presence, and charged him with being an accomplice in the flight of his sister : but he protested his total ignorance of it, with the greatest solemnity ; yet, too noble to conceal his sentiments beneath a subterfuge, he added, that, he could not condemn her, for flying from one of the worst of human miseries ; and that her welfare was so inexpressibly dear to him, that nothing but the certain conviction that she had placed herself under

the protection of a man of honour, who adored her, could leave him at ease; but that she, doubtless, was by this time the wife of the Marquis of Langton, and, persecuted as she had been, had secured her only chance for happiness.

The passion of the Marchese was terrible. Never before had his son seen him abandon himself to such ungovernable fury. He shuddered, not from fear of the effects of his rage, but at the discovery of such intemperate violence as was disgraceful to human nature.

The Marchesa had vented her disappointment in tears; and, to her, Leonardo addressed himself in terms of consolation: for, from his father, he had retreated with a sentiment of painful condemnation. He bade her recollect that

Olivia had united herself to a man of most amiable manners and character, and possessing rank and affluence much superior to their own ; and that, therefore, the alliance was an honour to them. That, by attempting to force her inclinations, they had driven her to bestow her hand clandestinely ; and her conduct, therefore, being attributable to themselves, he hoped they would listen to the pleadings of affection, as well as the dictates of reason, and extend to her their forgiveness. He then retreated precipitately, unwilling to listen to the reply he saw the Marchese was about to make. He immediately repaired to the palazzo of Count Marioni, being anxious to learn what route they had taken. They both made every possible inquiry, but no intelligence could be obtained, so judiciously had the escape of the lovers been

arranged ; but when Leonardo returned home, he learnt, with the greatest satisfaction, that the faithful and affectionate Margaurita had accompanied his sister in her flight. He now resolved to wait patiently until he should hear from the fugitives ; being convinced they would write to him from the first safe asylum they should reach.

The Marchese's rage now subsided into a gloomy discontent ; and, in a few days, Leonardo got the letters he expected from the Marquis and his sister. They were dated from Chambery, and had been forwarded by an express. The packet contained certificates of the marriage ceremony, which had been performed both by a Roman catholic priest and an English clergyman ; and also, a copy of a deed of settlement made on

the Marchioness, of so generous a nature, that even Leonardo, who knew the liberal mind of his friend, was astonished at this act of munificence.

Olivia anxiously besought her brother to inform her if there was any chance of her procuring forgiveness from the Marchese and Marchesa ; and the Marquis desired him to say, that he should be happy to receive their mandate to return to Florence, and throw himself, with his Olivia, at their feet. The Marchioness inclosed a letter for Rosalie, which she begged of him to get forwarded to *Santa Agnese*, as soon as possible.

In the present temper of his father and mother, Leonardo knew that all efforts at a reconciliation would be ineffectual ; and his opinion was confirmed by

a sudden illness with which the Marchese was seized that evening. Some dispatches were brought him, which the courier said were to be delivered only into his own hand; he accordingly quitted the drawing room and retired to the library to receive them. The courier departed immediately; and, soon after, the servant in waiting was alarmed by hearing some great weight fall in the library. He ran in, and perceived a letter, torn in a thousand fragments, on the floor, on which also lay the Marchese, in strong convulsions. An alarm was instantly spread, and the whole household flew to his assistance. The Marchesa and her guests soon learnt the disaster, and crowded into the library. Leonardo, who was from home, was instantly sent for, and medical assistance called in. Every effort was used for his

restoration : but he was conveyed to his bed without any other signs of life than the convulsive distortions, which sometimes passed across his pallid features. The Marchesa was carried to her own apartment, more dead than alive, and Signor Barrazzi, although affected by these melancholy events, divided his attention between them. Towards morning, the physicians pronounced that the Marchese was returning to his recollection : but he opened his eyes with the wildest horror, and seemed to recoil from the gaze of his son, and his attendants. Cordials were now administered to him, and he appeared to be rapidly recovering ; but he closed his eyes, and testified the greatest dislike to talk, or be talked to ; and remained obstinately silent for some hours. At length, to the great surprize of Leonardo, who remained at his bedside, he raised

himself, perfectly composed, from his pillow, and inquired what sort of attack he had suffered, that he felt so much lassitude, and saw so many persons about him in anxious attendance?

Leonardo tenderly informed him that he had fallen into a sort of fainting fit, from which he was most happy to see him so well recovered.

The Marchese then inquired after his lady; and, on being informed the alarm she had suffered, desired Leonardo to inform her, that he found himself so much restored to health, that he should instantly rise, and go to her apartment.

The medical professors now took

their leave, and his own servant alone remained, who, by his orders, assisted him to dress. Before he proceeded to the Marchesa, he descended to the library, supported by the arm of his attendant.

From the great confusion which had prevailed in the family, the library remained precisely in the same state in which it had been left the preceding evening. The Marchese threw his eyes on the floor, and desired his servant to gather up the scraps of paper which lay there scattered. They had been trampled upon so much, by the crowd drawn into the room on the first alarm, that few were to be collected, and those so much rubbed and soiled, that the writing was totally illegible. Satisfied at this, he went directly to his lady, whose joy

at his recovery had counteracted the effect of her terror, and he found her rising to attend him.

The circumstance of the admission of the courier, and the torn letter, which was first seen upon the floor, had been related to Leonardo ; and it was evident to him, that some news of the most distressing import must have occasioned the violent convulsions which the Marchese had suffered. He possessed too nice a sense of honour to wish to pry into any of his father's secrets ; but the command he had so soon acquired over himself was extraordinary, and his astonishment increased, when he saw him take his place, as usual, at the dinner table, and appear both well and cheerful.

Count Marioni, who had been absent from Florence two days, called in the evening. The Marchese mentioned his indisposition, although but slightly, to which the Count replied, that he was infinitely rejoiced to see him well again :

“ For otherwise,” said he, “ I know I should meet with a disappointment in a request I have to make of Barrazzi. I am going upon a little tour for a week or nine days, and I think the excursion will be of mutual advantage to us both ; for it will benefit his health, and convert what would otherwise prove a tedious journey to me, into a pleasant one. If you feel yourself sufficiently recovered to admit of his absence, pray, Marchese, lay your commands upon him to accompany me.”

" My indisposition is, by no means, of a serious nature," replied the Marchese; " and, consequently, does not render it at all necessary for Leonardo to remain at home on my account."

Some company just then arriving, to inquire after the Marchese, the Count seized a moment in which they were all engaged in conversation, to say to Leonardo.

" I have received a letter which contains only the word—‘ *Remember.*’ Not a moment is to be lost, for the man who brought it has been waiting these two days."

Leonardo felt his whole frame shake

with agitation, as the Count gave him this intimation.—

“ Dear friend ! ” replied he, “ prepare every thing : I will be with you at midnight.”

CHAPTER VI.

“A fellow, by the hand of Nature mark'd,
Quoted, and sign'd, to do a deed of shame.”

•••••

ROSALIE beheld the visage and conduct of the Abbot with the utmost consternation. She wished to pursue him, and arrest his footsteps, by inquiring the cause; but fear, and that in-

explicable sensation of aversion she had ever felt towards him, restrained her. That she had committed an error, in suffering him to obtain a sight of the miniatures, was obvious: but what knowledge could he have of them? Could he possibly be a relation? Her heart said, No! That he was an enemy was much more probable. Yet if her parents were dead, how could the sight of their resemblances revive sentiments of so horrible a nature as those his countenance betrayed? She rejoiced in the reflection, that if they were still living, no possible injury could be done them by this discovery. His hatred to herself might, possibly, be removed by it; and he would, perhaps, cease to persecute her, if he knew her to be an unfortunate orphan. This idea was the most consoling one she could admit, and she strove to cherish it; but

she remained rivetted to the spot, and recurred again to every conjecture which her imagination could form. Surely, thought she at last, those strong emotions, which were visible in his terrible features, must have arisen from disappointment. He has, no doubt, averred to our Holy Father, the Pope, that the Lady Abbess and the good Father Sebastiano were my parents, and the sight of these pictures, which he saw me embalm with my tears, has convinced him that his accusations were groundless, and will be treated as slanders.

This supposition appeared, after all, the most natural: should it prove a reality, the Superior would be released, and herself relieved from persecution. Cheared by this hope, she was enabled to return to the convent, with looks sufficiently

composed to elude the observations of the nuns. Arrived in her apartment, she sat anxiously wishing for the hour of repose, in hopes that Magdalena might give her a passing call; but she was disappointed: and, even during the whole of the following day, could not find an opportunity to engage her attention, for a moment unobserved. At night, she again sat listening to the footsteps of the nuns, as they slowly retired, and dispersed to their different cells; and soon after the last sounds had died away upon her ear, the good Sister Magdalena stood before her.

With a palpitating heart, Rosalie related the occurrence on the terrazzo; and she had full time to describe her own sensations, and the suggestions which had arisen from them, as Magdalena was

too much overcome with surprize, to interrupt her. She at length declared, that she was of opinion, the strong emotions of the Abbot betrayed some knowledge of her parents ; and owned she had fears that fatal effects might ensue from the discovery. She forbore to say any thing further, being unwilling to augment the terrors Rosalie sustained. She next expressed her satisfaction that the plan of her escape had been arranged ; as, she said, this circumstance might render it still more necessary for her to quit the convent.

Rosalie inquired when Barnard would return ; but Magdalena reminded her of the length of such a journey on foot, and said that scarcely could he have reached Florence. Before she took her departure, she cautioned Rosalie to con-

ceal the pictures in some part of her dress, lest they should be demanded from her, or her apartment searched during her absence.

The following morning, as Rosalie was returning from the choir, she beheld the tall figure of Beneditto approaching, at a distance. She ever wished to avoid him, and now, perhaps, more than she had done before; and, therefore, asking the company of one of the nuns, she turned into the cloysters. At the same moment the Abbot entered them, by a shorter avenue, and soon met her. She summoned resolution to look at him. His features bore their wonted expression, but he looked at her with something like complacency; and, as he passed, gave her his benediction, with calm and pious solemnity. Rosalie, as she gained the en-

trance which led to the refectory, saw him enter the arched passage which led to the apartments of Ursula. His appearance at this rencontre revived all her hopes; and she found an opportunity, during the repast, to repeat the circumstance, in a low voice, to Magdalena, who felt little less surprize than herself.

As Rosalie was about to ascend to her apartment, a lay sister informed her that the Abbess Ursula wished to see her. She obeyed the summons with a palpitating heart. Now, thought she, some explanation certainly awaits me: perhaps even the crisis of my fate approaches.

When she entered the parlour, she found Ursula alone, and seated at a table

on which was placed a dessert of scarce and fine fruit. She bade Rosalie take a vacant chair; and said she had sent for her to partake of the fruit. The expectation of Rosalie was raised to the highest pitch. Every moment she imagined a topic would be introduced, on which all her hopes, all her wishes, were suspended ; but no such thing occurred : Ursula was studiously civil ; but, without entering upon any interesting conversation, at length dismissed her.

This was a new cause for wonder ; and, on entering her apartment, she sat down to recover her surprize, and investigate the cause of this mysterious change, both in the Father and Ursula. Unable, however, to develop either, and unwilling to indulge such flattering hopes as might render disappointment more acute, she

applied herself to some drawings, she had left unfinished on the table; but her box of colours had been overset, and some of them awkwardly replaced. Her pencils too had been removed from the place where she knew she had left them: and, on further examination, she was convinced her apartment had undergone a complete search. The caution of Sister Magdalena immediately occurred to her; and she was no longer at a loss to account for the extraordinary civilities of Ursula. So mean an act, whilst it excited her contempt, dissipated every expectation she had formed from the behaviour of the Father Beneditto. But remonstrances were vain: she had only to guard the miniatures, from which she resolved not to part whilst she had life, with increased care.

Some days of tranquillity now passed

away. The Father did not appear; and Ursula, whenever she saw her, was condescendingly civil. She perceived too, that the door of her apartment was no longer locked at night; a circumstance which was extremely pleasing to her, as Magdalena had now access to her chamber without observation.

A few evenings afterwards, she learnt from her, that she had seen Barnard; that the Count had returned with him, and was now secreted in a cliff, near the hamlet; and that she should see him at the grate the following morning.

Rosalie gazed at her friend with a melancholy and affecting expression; for the sense of her own sorrows was nearly lost in pity for the trial Magdalena had to endure: but she beheld her features un-

ruffled; and that, added to the sweet look of resignation which usually marked them, she wore an expression of conscious dignity, arising from self-approbation.

“ The Count,” said she, “ has no doubt; arranged every thing for your flight; but I must hear his plans, before I can settle how you are to pass these walls unobserved.”

“ Did not the Abbess,” asked Rosalie, in a tremulous voice, “ point out some passage which was but little known; and, therefore, best calculated for our design?”

“ She did, my child; and furnished me with two keys, which fortunately remained in her possession,” said Magda-

lena. “The first opens the door of a range of vaults, formerly used as penitentiary cells, for miserable offenders; but never used since she has presided in the convent: and the second will unlock a door at the end of a long passage, which winds underneath the terrazzo in the garden, and opens into the cemetery, and through which the unhappy victims who perished were secretly conveyed. Be not dismayed, my Rosalie, I will accompany you to this entrance; for it is necessary the keys should be brought back again, and I shall push them underneath the door of the dormitory; which is the signal agreed upon to announce your safety to our imprisoned friend.”

Tears forced themselves into the eyes of Rosalie. Magdalena perceived the conflict in her bosom; and, kissing her cheek, withdrew in silence.

Anxiety, hope, and fear, alternately took possession of the mind of Rosalie, and banished sleep from her pillow. Her happiness, or misery hung in an equal balance, on the event of the morrow. Should she be detected in her attempt to escape, accumulated horrors would await her; for her punishment would be terrible, and her death certain. She strove to chase these gloomy apprehensions away, well knowing how necessary it was for her to assume a composed countenance on the following day.

She arose with the dawn, and attended early matins; and by the time it was requisite for her to appear in the refectory, she was able to converse as usual: and at the request of some of the nuns, she accompanied them to the organ, and assisted in the rehearsal of a

new chant, which was to be performed at the next festival.

Count Marioni, during this time, had been admitted to the grate, in the habit, and assumed character of a Venetian merchant, returning home from foreign countries. The nuns flocked in to converse with him, and he became a ready purchaser of the ingenious works which they produced. His eye long sought for that form, which still retained its image on his heart: his ear to catch those accents which still vibrated on his memory: and, he had almost began to fear some fatal disappointment, when the entrance of a nun, whose black veil fell in thick folds to her feet, made him start from the spot on which he stood. The sisters were too much engaged in shewing their works to observe his agitation; but it did

not escape Magdalena, who said in a gentle but firm voice, that she found refreshments had not yet been offered him; and it was apparent he stood in need of them, after travelling through that inhospitable region. Without waiting for a reply, she quitted the apartment, but soon returned with a lay sister, who presented him, through the grate, with some iced cakes, and *liqueurs*.

She then addressed several questions to him; and, particularly, if he had been in England. On his replying in the affirmative, she made some comments in English, to inform him that she understood the language; having well remembered, from Rosalie's account, that he spoke it fluently. Her own knowledge of it had been acquired from Father

Sebastiano, when he gave lessons to Rosalie; and she had perfected herself in it, by reading with her, the works of English authors.

Count Marioni understood her well; and she told him he might converse without fear, as none of the nuns were acquainted with the language; but charged him to be cautious, not to mention any name. Sometimes she asked him questions very foreign to the purpose, to mislead the nuns; but her English words, entreated him to detail his plans.

Compelled to repress his emotions, and venerating the dignified conduct, and saint-like composure of Magdalena, the Count behaved with that discretion, which he had feared he could not command; and suffered no sentence to escape his lips

which could convey reproach to her heart, or insult the sanctity of her situation.

She was soon apprized that he had people stationed in a recess, among the mountains, to assist in the rescue of Rosalie, and owned that Barrazzi was of the party; as he would not commit entirely to another, the execution of an enterprize in which he was so deeply interested: but that the moment he had seen her under safe escort, he would leave her, and return to Florence; confiding to him the care of conducting her to Chambery, to the Marchioness of Langton; and he pledged himself not to follow her to England, until he had her own consent.

Magdalena now informed him, as briefly as she could, the way Rosalie was

to pursue; and directed him to be in the cemetery, to which there was easy access, just before the rising of the moon. The exact time of their own departure, she could not fix, as that depended on the hour when the Abbess retired; for, until then, they could not move with safety.

He assured her he would be in waiting from the close of the evening; but this she objected to, from the fear that some of the Dominican Monks might perceive their approach. Half-past eleven was, therefore, the hour fixed; to which it was agreed to be as punctual as exigencies would permit.

The nuns, who knew how fond Magdalena was of availing herself of every opportunity of conversing in Eng-

lish, testified no sort of surprize at this long dialogue : the Count, however, perceived that it was now necessary for him to withdraw. The gloom on his countenance increased ; and, bowing respectfully, he retired.

During the whole of this scene, Magdalena had not betrayed the least emotion ; neither had her voice indicated the smallest degree of remaining weakness. She had never removed her veil, and the deep folds of the drapery, had entirely concealed her face.

The moment the Count had retired, she hastened to the shrine of *Santa Agnese*; and throwing herself prostrate on the ground, devoutly acknowledged the intercession of the Saint, which had enabled her to expel from her heart all

remains of her former attachment; and to endure, with triumphant fortitude, that trial which had proved the sincerity of her faith.

She then joined some of the nuns, who were passing through the cloysters to the garden, in hopes that she might meet Rosalie. She perceived her at a distance, seated under the shade of the wide-spreading chesnut, on the terrazzo; but too deeply absorbed in thought to observe her approach. Quitting her companions, she ascended the steps, and was soon at her side.

As she described her interview with Count Marioni, and related the conversation which had passed, the heart of Rosalie bounded with gratitude and joy. A plan, so well arranged, and so near its

completion, could not be otherwise than successful; and the delicate propriety of Leonardo, was soothing to her sensibility and flattering to her pride.

They were now over the subterranean vault to be by them explored at night; and Magdalena told her that the door which terminated it, opened under the high flight of steps which descended from the arched gateway, into the cemetery, at the end of the terrazzo.

"The nuns," said she, "will retire at ten o'clock; and I will not lose a moment in coming to you, as we can conceal ourselves beneath the steps, until we hear your deliverers approach; for they might be discovered if they were kept waiting."

Rosalie assented to this ; and said, “ I shall be insensible to fear, whilst I am in your presence.”

“ I augur good success,” said Magdalena, “ from a circumstance which occurred this morning. Just at the time I expected the Count to arrive, Ursula requested my attendance in the parlour, on some business relative to the convent, on which she chose to ask my opinion; and, before I quitted her, she asked me to go and demand from the Abbess, whatever remaining keys she had in her possession, belonging to the convent. This enabled me to see her for a few moments, and to acquaint her with our plans; so that we have her prayers for our success, and she participates in our joy.”

Fearing to excite suspicion by pro-

longing their conference, they now separated, and for the rest of the day avoided each other.

Late in the evening, to her great surprize and inexpressible terror, Rosalie received an invitation to take coffee with Ursula. As there was no alternative, she gave a prompt obedience to the command, and was received with even affectionate marks of condescension and kindness. She gave her an homily to read, composed by one of the first preachers in Rome; and although the distracted thoughts of Rosalie, made her commit perpetual blunders, declared she read it in the best manner possible.

At nine o'clock, she rose to attend vespers; but Ursula still detained her: saying, she had an head-ach coming on,

and her company would amuse her. She soon afterwards declared herself so much worse, that she retired to her pillow, and issued an order for the nuns to repair to their cells, lest she should be disturbed by the noise of their footsteps along the arched passages or lofty corridors, on the closing of the doors.

The nuns instantly obeyed the mandate ; but no horror could exceed that of Rosalie, when Ursula asked her to sit by her for an hour, and read her to sleep. The tardiness of her reply might have given suspicions of the reluctance with which it was accorded ; but, appearing instantly to recollect herself, she said she would not give her so much trouble, and dismissed her to her apartment.

She found Magdalena waiting her

arrival, and almost breathless with affright at her absence. Fearing to be heard by any of the sisters, after such a general order for silence, she had passed into the chamber of Rosalie.

Thus circumstanced, they thought it inexpedient to delay their progress; and Magdalena, giving her arm to the trembling Rosalie, and concealing a lamp she had procured beneath the folds of her garment, conducted her trembling footsteps to the extremity of the first gallery, and then descended a flight of narrow stairs, which wound round the vaults beneath the building. Here Magdalena paused.

“ These doors,” said she, “ resemble each other so much, that, by this light; I cannot distinguish the one which the

Abbess pointed out to me ; and the trying the keys in locks grown rusty from disuse, might create such sounds as would prove our destruction."

Rosalie again felt appalled ; but Magdalena whispered her words of encouragement ; and, as they proceeded, she observed a door more strongly cased with iron bars than the rest : to this she applied the key, and, after some little time, unlocked it. She stopped the impatient Rosalie for some moments at the entrance, lest the confined and damp air in the passage should extinguish their light ; and then, drawing her gently forwards, was preparing to lock the door on the inside.

" Oh," exclaimed Rosalie, " forbear ! Suppose, in your return, your light should

go out, and you could not find the door, or be unable to turn the lock : you would assuredly perish, in these distant passages, before any search would be made after you."

" To remove such terror from your mind," replied Magdalena, " I will leave the door unclosed. I am no coward ; but it is appalling, to the strongest mind, to look upon these gloomy recesses, and reflect how many victims of unappeasable cruelty have here languished without comfort: perhaps perished for want of food."

Rosalie sundered.

" For what crimes," asked she, " could the unfortunate victims be doomed to such horrible punishments?"

“ Perhaps no others than you and I, my Rosalie, are now guilty of. In ages of darker superstition than these in which we live, resistance to the will of a Superior was an unpardonable offence: and the young creature who retained an attachment in the world, which made her unwilling to renounce it, expiated the heinous error by such a fate as we now contemplate. For those who assisted these miserable beings in an attempt to escape, still more terrible punishments were devised.”

“ Oh then, if you, my beloved friend, should be found to have aided me!—I cannot sustain the thought!—Let us instantly return. Indeed, indeed, I will proceed no farther!”

“ I spoke of former times,” replied

Magdalena, with solemn earnestness. "For myself, I have no fear ; and even if I had—. But there is no one, in the present state of usurped authority in this house, who dares proceed to such extremities. Even your emancipation will be my guard."

The lamp now burnt dim, and Magdalena stopped to trim it. Involved in impenetrable darkness, save the light which issued from the glimmering taper, she could only conjecture that they had quitted the vaults underneath the monastery, and were entering the passage beneath the terrazzo, for it was wide and lofty; and, by the strength of the arches, seemed to support a great weight above.

"There is one circumstance of im-

portance, which I have now to communicate to you," continued Magdalena, as they slowly proceeded along the broken pavement, " which will afford pleasure to your grateful bosom to know ; which is, that I believe it may soon be in your power to procure the enlargement, and, consequently, the restoration, of the Abbess."

" Oh, name the means !" exclaimed Rosalie. Direct me how I can accomplish an object, on which, not only my happiness, but my peace of mind, depends ?"

" Count Marioni," replied Magdalena, " has high connexions in Rome ; and, by interesting himself, he can defeat the machinations of the Father Beneditto. The Abbess believes that he proceeds

without authority. Of that I know not; but, if he does, his own removal will be the consequence of the representations of the Count: an event, which can alone restore us to the enjoyment of that repose, which we experienced before his appointment. I durst detain the Count no longer, this morning; and I knew the intimation to you would be sufficient."

"Alas! it is this idea alone," replied Rosalie, with a deep sigh, "which has reconciled me to the selfish conduct of accepting liberty myself, whilst those I love are persecuted and unhappy on my account. My own security is not half so dear to me, as the sweet hope of being able to accomplish the deliverance of my suffering benefactress, and her restoration to her office."

She was interrupted by a hollow

sound, which appeared at no great distance. Rosalie shrunk back with terror; but Magdalena, with composure said,—

“ We must be near the entrance; and they are here before us.”

At that instant they found their progress impeded by a massive door. Magdalena readily unlocked it, but two strong, and rusty bolts, for a time resisted all her efforts. At length she drew them back; and, hiding her lamp, that she might not be seen, folded Rosalie in a last and speechless embrace.

Cautiously opening the door, she beheld the tall figure of the Count, wrapped in a large cloak, and perceived three or four other persons indistinctly; for the moon had not yet diffused her

radience. She pressed the hand of Rosalie to her bosom; and, ejaculating a mental prayer for her safety, led her to the low pointed arch which projected beyond the door, and then hastily returning, drew the bolts.

In the trepidation of the moment, Rosalie nearly lost all consciousness; but the freshness of the air, after the unwholesome vapours of the damp passage, soon revived her, and she found herself in the arms of some one, who was moving along with rapid strides.

She soon found herself under the tall trees which encircled the monastery, under whose chequered shade, for the moon by this time had arisen above the horizon, her conductors stopped; and, placing her in a litter, with drawn cur-

tains round it, proceeded forwards with the same cautious silence.

The presages of Rosalie, were fortunate indeed, for Magdalena:--in closing the door she had overset her lamp; and the taper being extinguished, she was left in total darkness. Perhaps at any other time she might have felt some dismay; but her spirits were exhilarated by the happy accomplishment of her wishes, and she felt not for herself the smallest portion of anxiety. She began, however, to retrace her steps with slow precaution, and guided herself by the sides of the arch.

After a length of time, she arrived at the door of entrance, and having re-passed it, she strove to lock it, but could not: such she thought might have been

the case, but for the interposition of Rosalie, had she locked it on the other side, according to her first intention.

After various trials, she found the intricacies of the vaults precluded all possibility of regaining the staircase by which she had descended. She, therefore, determined to remain stationary for the night; and, after kneeling some time in devout prayer, she sat down on the pavement, and reclined her head against the door.

Sleep was entirely banished from her eye-lids; for the tumult her spirits had undergone, was not yet wholly subsided.

She had sat some time, her thoughts entirely absorbed by Rosalie, when a pale

gleam of light appeared at a small distance. Too much self-collected for surprise, she watched it for some time with attention, and found that it proceeded from a small grated window, through which the rays of the moon, now risen high enough to illumin that side of the convent, penetrated.

She arose and joyfully perceived that this small aperture gave light to the narrow staircase ; which she directly ascended ; and, being soon within her own knowledge, she proceeded, although with extreme silence, to the dormitory, and deposited the keys underneath the door.

A light which she perceived within, convinced her that the anxiety of the Abbess had not allowed of her going to rest. She dared not attempt to speak,

but the keys were removed; and it was unnecessary. With the same silent steps, she descended, and soon found herself in her own little cell.

In the mean time, the litter in which Rosalie was placed, was carried along with incredible rapidity: and yet, she judged they were ascending some of the most mountainous tracts; for sometimes she perceived herself to be lifted over the sharp-pointed acclivities of the rocks, where the passes were too narrow and angular for the litter to turn round them.

She also observed, that the persons who carried her, were relieved at intervals; and ventured once or twice to undraw the curtains: but the mountains

were rendered more frightfully perilous to the eye, from the broad masses of shadow thrown from the rugged summits in some, and, in others, by the strong light of a full-orbed moon, which, admitting no gradation of tint, by the effect of contrast, gave a more than natural magnitude to every prominent feature in the surrounding scenery ; so that she gladly replaced a barrier between herself and such objects of terror.

The profound silence observed by all the party, suggested to her the propriety of observing the same caution herself ; but after several hours had passed in this way, the litter was placed upon the ground, in a cavity formed by the projection of the rock ; and one of her conductors asked her if she would like to partake of any refreshments : for, as the

moon no longer afforded them light sufficient to proceed, they should wait there until the dawn of the morning enabled them to proceed.

This was the first time Rosalie had heard the sound of an human voice, since she quitted the convent. She thanked the man who had made her the offer of refreshments, but declined accepting it: begging of him to inform her, whether Count Marioni was still behind, or if they were to join him farther on their journey?

“Count Marioni!” said the man, in a voice of great amazement. “Who the d—l is he?”

Shocked at the rudeness of the interrogation, but supposing the name had

been concealed from him, Rosalie gently said—

“ I mean the Signor, who placed me in your care.”

“ Ho ! ho ! If that be your meaning, I dare say we shall see no more of him. He is far better lodged, than to be scampering over these mountains at this time of night.”

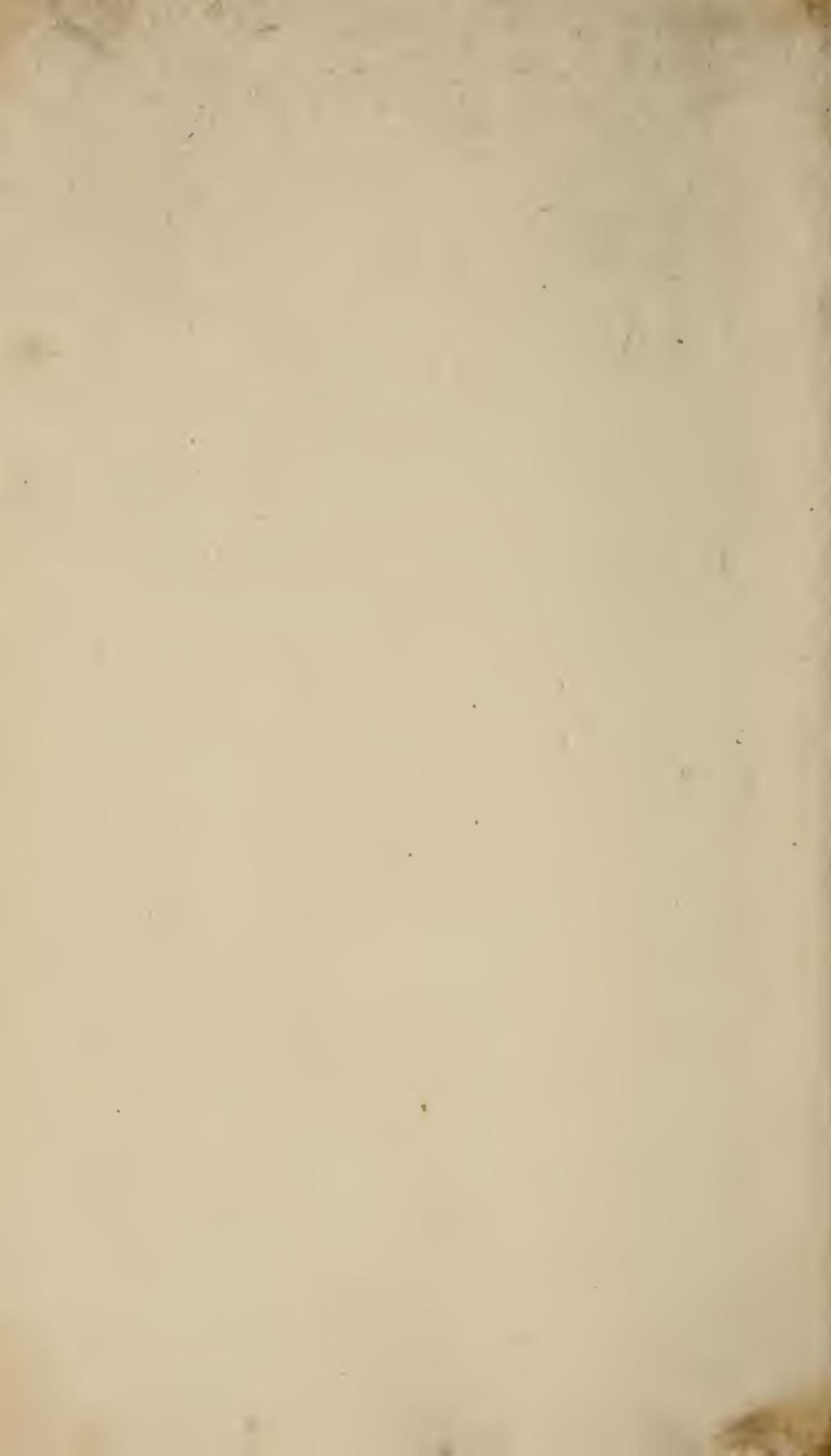
“ Who do you allude to ? ” asked Rosalie, with sad and fearful apprehensions. “ Are you not employed by Count Marioni, or Signor Barrazzi ? ”

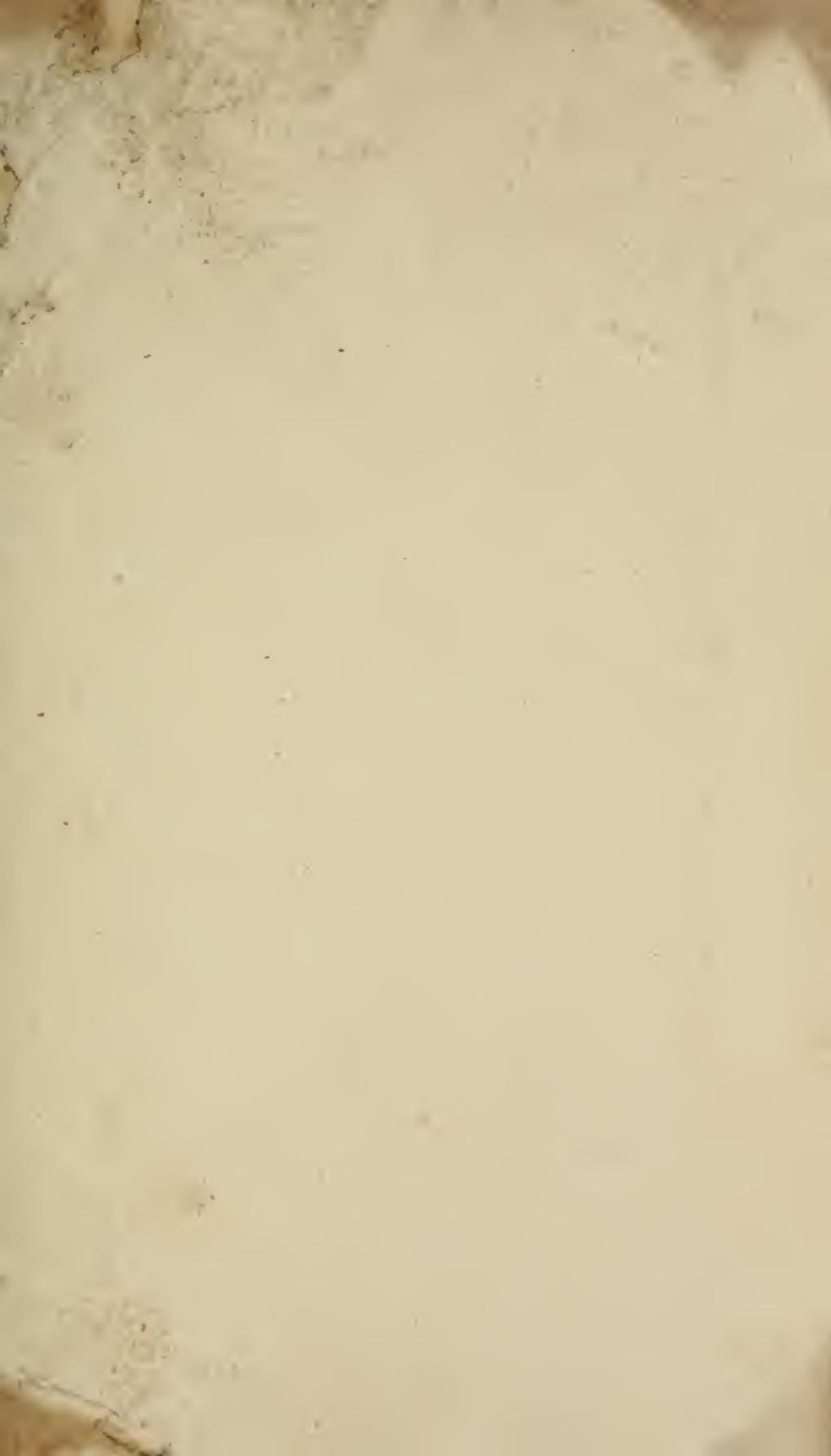
“ Here is some grand mistake, to be sure,” replied the man ; “ and so I thought at first, by your coming so willingly, when we all thought we were to carry

you off by force. However, as you are safe, and there is no farther use in keeping the secret, why it is as well to tell you at once, that Father Beneditto is our employer."

This name, so terrible, so dreaded, chilled the whole frame of Rosalie. She heard no more; but sunk lifeless at the bottom of the litter.

End of the Third Volume.





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